.hack//Legend
of the
Twilight
- Vol 3 -
Rei Izumi

Notes: That's it for this one

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// LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT™

National Best-Seller

3

Art by Rei Izumi
Story by Tatsuya Hamazaki

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Manga
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// LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT™

Rena and Shugo entered The World with dreams of becoming legends. Those dreams have quickly drifted into the twilight now that they're in prison! As the controversy surrounding Shugo's bracelet shifts into overdrive, will our heroes be deleted...or is it end of The World as we know it? Don't miss the climactic end to the best-selling multimedia manga in The World!

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//黄昏の腕輪伝説

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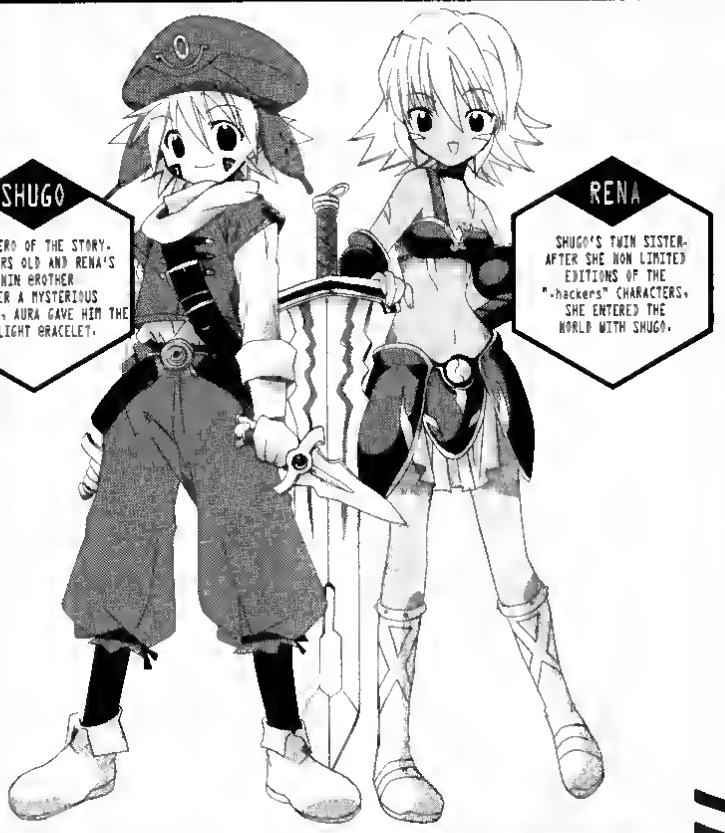


SHUGO

THE HERO OF THE STORY. 14 YEARS OLD AND RENA'S TWIN BROTHER. AFTER A MYSTERIOUS INCIDENT, AURA GAVE HIM THE TWILIGHT BRACELET.

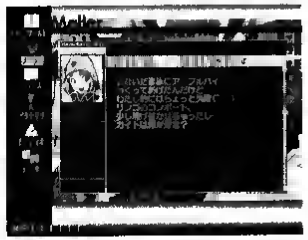
RENA

SHUGO'S TWIN SISTER. AFTER SHE WON LIMITED EDITIONS OF THE ".hackers" CHARACTERS, SHE ENTERED THE WORLD WITH SHUGO.

NEW GENERATION ONLINE

THE WORLD

What is THE WORLD? It's the largest online game in the world, played by 20 million people. Using head-mounted displays, gamers can freely move inside a totally realistic world. There have been problems with the game in the past, but recently it's been trouble-free. More people are joining each day.



CHARACTER

HOTARU

A GENTLE PLAYER WHO CAN'T HELP BUT LOVE EVERY LIVING CREATURE DUE TO HER BIZARRE PERSONALITY. SHE TENDS TO SURPRISE HER COMPANIONS. SHE'S VISITING THE JAPANESE SERVER FROM THE U.S.

OUKA

A CAREER HEROINE WHO CAN TRANSFORM ANYTIME SHE WANTS. SHE'S SO STRONG THAT SHE'S KNOWN AS "OUKA THE DIVINE FIST." AND SHE'S ALWAYS LOOKING FOR A FIGHT.

MIREILLE

A NAVIMASTER WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IN PLAYING "THE WORLD" IS TO COLLECT RARE ITEMS. INTRIGUED BY SHUGO'S BRACELET, SHE JOINS HIS PARTY.

BALMUNG

A LEGENDARY PLAYER FORMERLY KNOWN AS "THE DESCENDANT OF FIANNA." HE'S NOW AN EMPLOYEE OF CC CORP., WORKING AS AN ADMINISTRATOR IN "THE WORLD."

REKI

BALMUNG'S SUBORDINATE. ALWAYS SCRAMBLING AROUND TO TAKE CARE OF WHATEVER BALMUNG SAYS NEEDS TO BE TAKEN CARE OF. REKI HAS BEEN THROUGH A LOT.

KOMIYAN III

THE CHARACTER PLAYED BY KOMIYAMA, A CLASSMATE OF SHUGO AND RENA. HE'S ALWAYS WITH HIS TRUSTY M... OSCAR, A GRUNTY.

KAMUI

HEAD KNIGHT OF CC CORP.'S OWN "COBALT KNIGHT BRIGADE." SHE IS ONE COOL CHARACTER AS SHE CRACKS DOWN ON PLAYERS WHO BREAK THE RULES.

MAGI

SHE'S KAMUI'S SUBORDINATE. FAITHFUL TO KAMUI AND SUPPORTIVE OF HER EVERY MOVE.

ZEFIE

A VAGRANT AI THAT CALLS HERSELF THE CHILD OF AURA. DON'T LET HER CUTE LOOKS FOOL YOU. HER PERSONALITY CAN BE A BIT DIFFICULT.

SHUGO...
YOU ARE
THE CHOSEN ONE
THE ONE DESTINED TO CARRY ON THE LEGEND OF THE DOT HACKERS
login_13
IS THIS BRACELET REALLY SO BAD THAT IT'S A CRIME?
.. BUT NOW HERE I AM, STUCK IN A JAIL CELL.
IT'S TRUE .. I WANTED TO BE A HERO..
AURA?!
WHEN AM I TO SEE YOU AGAIN?
...OH, AURA...

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3

LOGIN 13
IT'S NOT OVER YET
……
……ONII-CHAN. YOU'RE UP?
RENA?
GUESS I FELL ASLEEP...
grooming
SORRY... I DOZED OFF THERE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE GOT SEPARATED FROM THE OTHERS, HASN'T IT?
……
I WONDER HOW LONG THEY'RE GONNA LEAVE US HERE.
HEY, RENA.
OH...
LOOKS LIKE I STILL HAVE IT.
...RENA?

RENA'S SUCH A GOOD KID...
SHE'S NOT USED TO DOING "WRONG" THINGS..
...OR BEING PUNISHED.
YOU'RE SO IGNORANT, ONII-CHAN! THAT'S WHY YOU'RE ABLE TO BE SO HAPPY!!
BEING CAUGHT AND IMPRISONED BY THE SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS IS... EXTREMELY DISGRACEFUL!!
ONII-CHAN!!
YOU'VE GOT YOUR BIG BROTHER WITH YOU.
I'm here for you!
WE'LL BECOME THE LAUGHING STOCK OF ALL JAPAN!
PEOPLE WILL START RUMORS ABOUT US, AND EVERYONE WILL BELIEVE THEM WHETHER THEY'RE TRUE OR NOT.
WE'LL BECOME THE SUBJECT OF RIDICULE ON THE MESSAGE BOARDS..
IF I KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN...
.....
RENA...
I-I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO LIVE IT DOWN!
RENA!
WHAT'S WRONG?! ARE YOU HURT?
I'VE HAD IT!!
TREATING US LIKE CRIMINALS!
UG...
UWAAAH!!
Rena...

SOME GAME! THIS IS WORSE THAN BEING GROUNDED! IT'S A REAL PRISON!
HOW CAN THEY JUST LEAVE US HERE?!
I STILL DON'T GET IT!
THEY'RE JUST GONNA DELETE OUR CHARACTERS ANYWAY
I DON'T WANT TO JUST SIT HERE, BIDING MY TIME..
NO. I'VE HAD ENOUGH.
I'M LOGGING OUT.
!!
I.. QUIT BEIN "RENA"

...I NEVER WOULD HAVE TRIED TO WIN THESE STUPID PCS!
!!
PC = Player Character

WHAT'RE YOU SAYING?
THESE AVATARS WERE YOUR HEROES! YOU WERE DYING TO WIN THEM!
I REALLY WAS EXCITED..
WITH THE HERO "KITE".. WITH YOU, ONII-CHAN, THE TWO OF US...
...COULD BECOME SOME-ONE LIKE "BLACK ROSE".. IT WAS LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE..
THAT I, RENA...
BUT, INSTEAD

RP. ONLINE
ISTRATION
ROOM
HM...I MIGHT NEED THAT DATA, TOO.
EKI, L YOU ETCH FILE?
E-EXCUSE ME, SIR! I SORT OF ZONED OUT.
.....
ET IT RIGHT ! ER-- T WAS WERE KING R?
!
...REKI?
I'VE WORKED YOU TOO HARD. YOU'RE EX-HAUSTED...
DON'T BE SILLY, SIR. IT'S SPOOKY TO HEAR YOU TALK LIKE THAT.
T'S EL OF E...
ASK THIS, T...
IT'S NOT AN EASY JOB. DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HANDLE IT?
DURI ABS RE WAN TO CHA
.....!
WORKING FOR YOU IS NOTHING BUT HARD WORK, BUT I GLADLY PUT UP WITH IT.
YOU'RE THE TOUGHEST BOSS IN THE ENTIRE COMPANY.
...BALMUNG-SAN?
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE TALKING TO...
PLEA SIR DON UNDE ESTIM ME
.....
EVEN IF YOUR FILES ARE UNDER STRICT SCRUTINY FROM THE BRASS.
I'LL HAVE ALL THE LOGS RELATING TO YOU DELETED IN NO TIME.

BALMUNG OF AZURE SKY HAS RETURNED!

I'M UNTING N YOU
THE HOPE--
LIGHT THE IGHT-- IGHT ERE.
OR THE ORLD I OVE--
ONCE AGAIN, THE TIME HAS COME FOR ME TO STOP BEING AN ADMINISTRATOR...
...AND TO RETURN TO THE WORLD AS A PLAYER.
DON'T LOOK AWAY AS IF I'VE ALREADY BEEN BEATEN BY THE DARKNESS.
THAT'S WHAT I LEARNED FOUR YEARS AGO.

BYE-BYE.. ONII-CHAN
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO AT THIS POINT!!
LOOK!
HEY!!
I... I...
.....
I DON'T WANT TO SEE RENA DIE...
I'M GLAD I GOT TO PLAY AS THIS CHAR-ACTER.
RENA, NO!
LOGGING OUT IS...
YUP...
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, SIR.

...AND TO GO TO SO MANY EVENTS?
WASN'T THAT FUN TO MEET SO MANY PEOPLE..
BUT YOU BROUGHT ME HERE AND SHOWED ME JUST HOW WRONG I WAS!
...THEN I MET ZEFIE...
JEEZ! THAT WAS AGES AGO.
RENA, YOU USED TO GET LOST SO EASILY. DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
Ha Ha!
I HAD TO LOOK REALLY HARD FOR YOU AS IF MY LIFE DEPENDED UPON IT.
ME...?
HA HA!
JUST LIKE YOU, RENA--

THANKS TO YOU, RENA.
I-I'VE COME TO REALLY LOVE THIS PLACE, THE WORLD.

ZEFIE SAYS SHE ALSO...
...DOESN'T WANT RENA TO DIS-APPEAR!
.....
...ZEFIE
.....

I'M SORRY I COULDN'T PROTECT YOU.
HEH HEH.
I DON'T WANT MY LITTLE SISTER TO HATE THE WORLD
I'M NOT SURE HOW TO PUT THIS, BUT..
.....
I LET YOU HAVE SUCH A LOUSY TIME.
Don't cry.
ONII-CHAN

HEY!
I'M NOT GANGURO!! I TOLD YOU, MY NAME IS RENA!!
HOW VIOLENT! WHY CAN'T SHE BE MORE LIKE AURA?
THIS ISN'T A BOXING MATCH, YOU KNOW.
.....
RENA?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I SHOULD REALLY TALK TO HER MOM ABOUT THIS!
JEEZ! THAT ZEFIE, WHAT DO WE DO WITH HER?
IT DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT TO JUST END THINGS FOR NO REASON.
I'M SURE "RENA" FEELS THE SAME WAY.
THE GIRL LACKS DISCIPLINE!!
HEE HEE HEE!
R-RENA?

ZEFIE?!
MY LOVING BOOMERANG-HOOK SHOULD KNOCK SOME SENSE INTO THAT DEPRESSED GANGURO-GIRL!!

wasn't listening.
NOPE!
IT'S NOTHING!!
HUH? DI
YOU SA
SOMETHIN
"BLACK ROSE" SUPPORTED "KITE"-- WHY NOT ME, THEN?!!
DOT HACKERS
.....
AS THE SUCCESSOR TO THE DOT HACKERS...
I WON'T LOOK AWAY
ANYMORE.
O MY
NO.

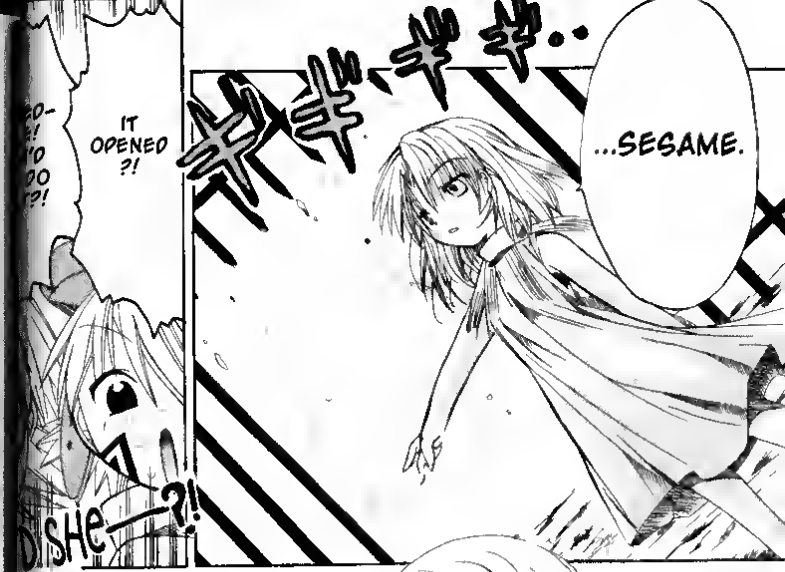
.....
なぜ…
I AGREE!!
OUR ACCOUNTS ARE STILL ALIVE
IT'S TOO SOON TO GIVE UP!!
YEP! WE SHOULD KEEP TRYING AS LONG AS WE CAN!
ONII-CHAN ALWAYS...
EVER SINCE THAT TIME...
...ONII-CHAN HAS BEEN RENA'S HERO, YOU KNOW?

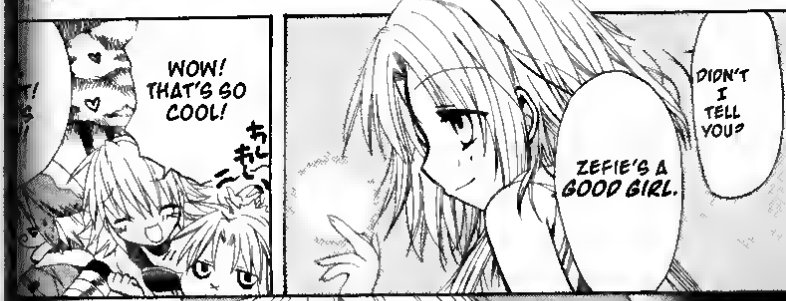
GOING TO MEET WITH AURA, ZEFIE MOM, SOUND ALL WELL AN GOOD...
...BUT FIRST, WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS CELL.
I GUESS ONLY AN ADMINISTRA CAN OPEN
I DON'T SUPPOSE "OPEN SESAME" WOULD WORK?
...DO YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE?
OF COURSE! ZEFIE, AREN'T YOU BORED TO DEATH STAYING IN THIS CRUMMY PLACE?
ALL RIGHT.
OPEN...

...I WILL BECOME STRONG!

NEW GENERATION ONLINE

THE WORLD





login_14
...ESCAPED?
HOW DID THEY...? THIS PRISON IS...!
.....
HO
THAT FILTHY DATA... IT COMPLETELY DISREGARDS THE RULES.
I UNDERESTIMATED HER.
EH?!
THAT NPC GIRL?! HOW COULD SHE DO THAT?
NPC Non-Player Character
IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE WORK OF THE VAGRANT AI.
IF MY SUSPICIONS ARE CORRECT...
WHY DIDN'T MANAGEMENT APPROVE OUR REQUEST TO DELETE THE PCS?
WE SHOULD'VE TERMINATED THEIR ACCOUNTS THE MOMENT WE IMPRISONED THEM.

SUBJECT: FROM AZURE SKY

SENDER: BALMUNG

FRIENDS OF AURA,

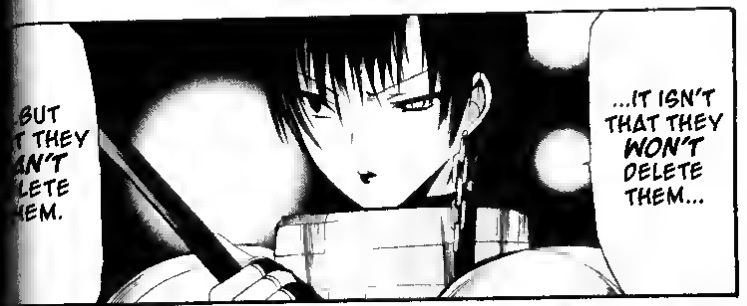
BECAUSE YOU SEEM LIKE YOU'RE STILL LOGGED IN, I'M SENDING YOU AN E-MAIL. NOT AS A SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR OR THE CC CORP., BUT AS BALMUNG OF AZURE SKY. THERE IS SOMETNING I MUST TELL YOU, THE DOT HACKERS.

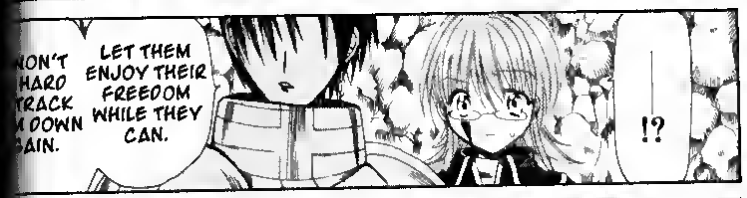
PLEASE COME TO THE NET SLUMS TODAY AT XX:XX. I KNOW THIS IS SUDDEN, BUT IT IS OF GRAVE IMPORTANCE.

I ALSO CONTACTED OTHERS WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP VIA THEIR CELL PHONES.

I'LL LET YOU KNOW THE DETAILS LATER. IT COULD GET A BIT ROUGH. I SUGGEST YOU COME PREPARED FOR BATTLE.

LOGIN 14
SEPARATION AND ENCOUNTER


...IT ISN'T THAT THEY WON'T DELETE THEM...
BUT T THEY AN'T LETE EM.


!?
LET THEM ENJOY THEIR FREEDOM WHILE THEY CAN.
NON'T HARD TRACK DOWN AIN.

...NOW IS OUR CHANCE TO CLEAN UP THAT AREA, USING SHUGO AS OUR BAIT!!
WITH THAT GOOD-FOR-NOTHING BALMUNG OUT OF FAVOR WITH MANAGEMENT...
...THAT HIVE OF BUGS AND GLITCHES WHERE HACKED CHARACTERS ABUSE THE SYSTEM. THE PLACE THAT WAS NOT BUILT BY THE WORLD'S DESIGNERS, AND YET IS STILL CONNECTED TO THE WORLD.
AFTER ALL, THERE'S ONLY ONE PLACE WHERE KNOWN CRIMINALS LIKE THEM CAN EXPECT TO FIND SOLACE...
WE WILL DESTROY EVERY BUG IN THE CITY.
THAT'S THE DUTY OF THE COBALT KNIGHT BRIGADE!
THE NET SLUMS!

IF WE LOGGED NOW, WE PROBAB NEVER ABLE T USE THES CHARACT AGAIN
WE'D REGRET IT FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.
...OKAY.
I'LL KEEP FIGHTING INSIDE THE WORLD.
THA WH WO GIVE
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE YOU TWO!
!!
HUU HUU HUU I'VE CAUGHT YOU AT LAST!
!!
!
Y- YOU'RE --!!

I BET WE'RE THE FIRST PLAYERS TO SUCCESSFULLY BREAK OUT OF PRISON IN THE WORLD!
...HEY!
WHAT?
SO, UH.. SINCE WE'RE FUGITIVES, WHERE CAN WE LIE LOW?
BUT THAT MEANS THAT NOW WE'RE FUGITIVES INSTEAD OF HEROES.
Heh heh
AH HA HA... I SUPPOSE THAT'S TRUE!
WE MIGHT AS WELL... ...LOG OUT NOW.
BUT IF WE DO, ZEFIE WILL BE ALL ALONE.
YEAH I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.

KOMI-YAMA...
KOMI-YAMA-KUN...
...I SOR
TO MAKE AMENDS FOR THE PAIN I'VE CAUSED YOU, I WOULD GLADLY SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE BY YOUR SIDE--!
ESPECI YOU
RENA-CHAN! YOU'RE OKAY? YOU'RE N HURT?
ER.. YEAH ...
I DON'T TRUST YOU, LIZARD-LIPS! WHAT'S THE REAL REASON YOU'RE HERE?
SHUGO KUNISAK WHAT'S T MATTER W YOU?!

--YOU --!
RENA-CHAN!
OH, HOW I'VE WAITED TO SEE--
K-KOMI-YAMA!!
AMORE!!
SHUT UP!!
WHAT DONE, GOT A NERVE WING FACE E!
I WILL NOT BE TRAMPLED ON BY THE LIKES OF YOU!
WH-WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, SHUGO KUNISAKI?!
...SUCH HARD WORDS, WHEN I HAVE COME HERE...
...TO APOLOGIZE.
I JUST MEANT TO PICK ON YOU A BIT, SHUGO KUNISAKI. YOU KNOW, ALL IN GOOD FUN.

THAT'S ENOUGH!
THEY'RE BOTH IDIOTS!
RENA?!
I'M SORRY.
ONII-CHAN DESTROYED YOUR PC, KOMIYAMA-KUN.
Y-YES?!
WHAT IS IT?
...SIGH... ALL RIGHT...
ENOUGH ALREADY! ONII-CHAN!!
WHY SHOULD I APOLOGIZE TO THIS LOSER?!
C'MON, ONII-CHAN, APOLOGIZE, WILL YOU?!
KOMIYAMA.

QUIET!
GYAA!
HEY! YOU STARTED IT, KUNISAKI!
KYA!
B-BUT, RENA! THIS GUY IS...
ONII-CHAN!! KOMIYAMA-KUN!! WILL YOU TWO CUT IT OUT?!
THE CLOWNS OF CLASS 3-A!
SIGH
CLOWNS?!
CLOWN...
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HAD TO RETAKE THE FINAL EXAM! YOU'RE TWICE THE DUMMY I AM!
KUNISAKI, YOU CALL ME AN IDIOT?
GYAA!
AND I MADE UP THAT "LONELY PRINCE" LINE. THAT WAS AN INSULT, YOU STUPID IDIOT!
WH... HOW DARE YOU MAKE FUN OF ME, KUNISAKI?!
KYA!
HOW CAN PEOPLE LUMP ME WITH A LOSER NOOB LIKE KUNISAKI?!
B-BUT--! I AM THE LONELY PRINCE KOMIYAN THE THIRD!
GYA!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

ME MUCHO SORRY.
YOU DON'T... MEAN IT, DO YOU...?
GRR
WHOa!
WHAAAT?
NOW FIX THIS FACE!
IF APOLOGIES WERE ENOUGH, WE WOULDN'T NEED SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?!
SHOULD I TRY USING THE BRACELET ON YOU AGAIN?
SCARY!!
It might work.
Idiot
ZEFIE
It's rude to point.
..REPAIR THAT IDIOT'S DATA?
DO YOU WANT ME TO...
ER-- I MEAN...
CAN YOU, LITTLE GIRL?
ZEFIE IS...
ZEFIE?!
Don't touch that guy!
L-Little girl...?!
...MR. STUPID-HEAD.
...A GOOD KID, UNLIKE YOU...
Stroke.
CLOSE YOUR EYES...
MY FACE IS...!!
MY FACE...
AH...
WHERE DID SHE HIT?
I JUST NICKED HIM.
Her legendary right hook!!
SHE'S E LIKE THA DAY TO
...AN TAST MY FIST!
ABABYO?!
Bravo!

FIXED!
IT'S OT!!
FZT FZT
IT WASN'T LONG AGO.
...THAT THIS PLACE WAS FORBIDDEN TO EXIST
YOU'RE BACK.
BALMUNG OF AZURE SKY.
I SHOULD CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR RESURRECTION
HEH HEH
THANKS BUT YOU SHOULD REALLY BE COMFORTING ME ON LOSING MY JOB AS ADMINISTRATOR
JUST LOOK FOR YOURSELF!!
--HMM!!
MUTTER
SKIN ITS CITY... TER...
I'M UGLY.
ズル
PLEASE GIVE ME BACK MY ORIGINAL, BEAUTIFUL FACE!
YOU, LITTLE GIRL!
DION'T KOMIYAMA-KUN FLUNK ART CLASS?
BOON?
BUSH!
IT'S BETTER THAN IT WAS BEFORE!
SHE WAS TOO GOOD TO HIM!
ZEFIE-CHAN ALWAYS DOES GOOD WORK!
.....
WHAT? IT'S NOT FIXED?
.....?

...ALL RIGHT.
WISEMAN... W
YOU CONTACT
MASTER OF T
NET SLUMS?
I'M LOGGED IN FROM HOME RIGHT NOW.
SO, BACK ON YOUR CUSTOM-BUILT BEAST OF A MACHINE, EH?
I THINK I HAVE THE GIST OF WHAT'S GOING ON, OLD FRIEND. NOW... WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?
THE WORLD IS A GAME.
GROWNUPS SHOULDN'T MESS AROUND WITH PEOPLE'S PLAYGROUNDS...
I DO.
I TOO HAVE GROWN QUITE FOND OF THIS WORLD.
WE'LL NEED TO MOBILIZE...
I'LL HELP YOU OUT.
TELL ME WHAT TO DO.
IT'S MORE LIKE... .. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH HIM.
IT'S NOT AS IF I DON'T ACKNOWL-EDGE HIS ABILITY.
I APPRE-CIATE IT.
I'LL DO AS YOU WISH, GREAT AZURE KNIGHT.
WHAT IS IT?
NOTHING... IT'S JUST THAT I ALWAYS ASSUMED YOU HATED THAT HACKER
PON
MAIL...
IT'S FROM HIM...
Baimung...

IT IS HER--OUR FRIEND'S-- WISH.
I WI NOT THEM DELET
WHAT HAPPENED?
AH, YOU CAME
YOO-HOO BALTAN!" WANTED SEE ME ☆
*a nickname for B
I NEED YOUR HELP.
NO PROBLEM! IT'S SUMMER VACATION, AND I'VE GOT NOTHING ELSE TO DO. OH, AND BIG SIG SENDS YOU HER REGARDS.
NYA HA HA. YOU NEED THE POWER OF A HOUSEWIFE? ☆
YOU, THE PLAYERS WHO WERE ONCE CALLED THE DOT HACKERS.
SORRY TO ASK YOU ALL HERE ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE... IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.

If there's anything we can do, just let us know.
Sounds like something big is about to go down.
Sure you aren't taking on too much?
HMM...
SHUGO HAS THE SAME NATURE
THE ATTRIBUTES OF A TRUE HERO, NE?
IT WAS THE SAME FOUR YEARS AGO... HE WOULD DROP ANYTHING AND FACE ANY DANGER FOR THE SAKE OF HIS FRIENDS.
IRL, HE MUST BE QUITE BUSY WITH INTERVIEWS AND THE LIKE HE MUST HAVE JUST GRADUATED
HEH HEH HEH
HOW JUST LIKE HIM.

BROKE OUT?!
B-
SO, UH...
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY WE'RE ON THE LAM.
OH!!
YOU ARE A SPECIAL LITTLE GIRL, AREN'T YOU?!
IT WAS BECAUSE OF ZEFIE
BUT... HOW?!
YOU'D BE BETTER OFF NOT GETTING INVOLVED WITH FUGITIVES LIKE US.
WE DON'T WANT TO... TROUBLE YOU.
WE SHOULD GET GOING.
THOSE ADMIN GUYS ARE REALLY STRICT.
IF THEY SEE YOU WITH US, THEY'LL ARREST YOU, TOO.
...AND, ZEFIE... SHE'S CONSIDERED A VAGRANT AI.

HEE HEE HEE!
HEE
what a waste...
UGH! YOU REALLY ARE HOPELESS.
BEAUTIFUL, LONELY, HIGH PRINCE KOMIYAN THE THIRD!! RESURRECTED TO HIS FORMER GLORY!!
komi-san is extremely touched!!
I'VE NEVER BEEN TREATED WITH SUCH KINDNESS IN THE ONLINE WORLD BEFORE!
SO, YOU WERE RELEASED BECAUSE THEY FOUND YOU INNOCENT, RIGHT?
OUR REUNION IS SO FORTUITOUS. ESPECIALLY AS I GOT TO SEE YOU AGAIN, RENA-CHAN!

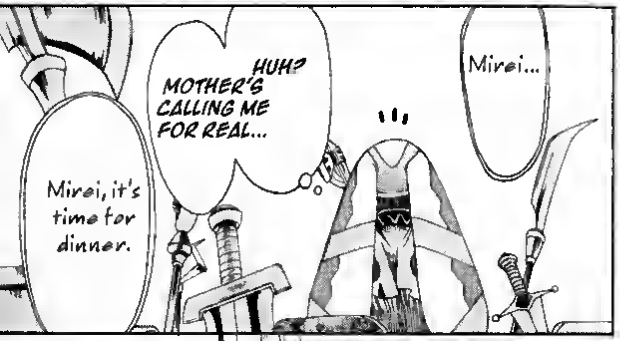
WAIT. I SHALL STAY WITH YOU. LET ME JOIN YOUR PARTY.
YOU'RE ACTING TOUGH, BUT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE KEYBOARD YOU'RE JUST SHUGO KUNISAKI DO YOU REALLY WANT TO BE ALONE?
NO THAT'S NOT IT WE'RE REALLY IN DEEP TROUBLE!
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SYSTEM ADMINS HERE!
WHAT DO YOU TAKE ME FOR, KNAVE?!
I, THE LONELY HIGH PRINCE KOMIYAN...
...SHALL NEVER GIVE IN!!
KOMIYAMA-KUN...I'M REALLY GRATEFUL FOR THE OFFER.. BUT IT'S DANGEROUS.
I WILL PROTECT BOTH RENA-CHAN AND THE LITTLE GIRL!!
What a maroon.
NOW! LET'S GO TALK TO THE SYS ADMIN...
BESIDES, THE DISASTER ASSOCIATED WITH THAT CHEAT NO LONGER EXITS
I'LL BE OF GREAT USE TO YOU MUCH MORE USEFUL THAN THAT NOOB KUNISAKI, DON'T YOU THINK?
HEY, WATCH IT!
EVEN THOUGH PLAY FAI KNOW MY AROUND M AND HAC I EVEN MY OWN PAGE!
.....
...AND CLEAR U THIS LITTLE MIS UNDERSTANDIN
I GUESS WE HAVE NO CHOICE.
HOW DARE YOU CALL ME AN IDIOT?!
WHOA
KOMIYA EVEN AN LIKE YOU SAY SMA THING SOMETI

WELCOME TO THE TEAM!
ALL FOR ONE!!
WHAT WOULD THE KIDS AT SCHOOL SAY IF THEY SAW THIS?
CLASS OWNS CLASS A ARE TUALLY RKING ETHER
KUNI-SAKI...
WHERE'S RENA-CHAN?
HMM --?
SHE'S TAKING A NAP JUST NOW.
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, I'LL WAKE HER RIGHT UP.
I MESSED UP YOUR PC.
KI SHI SHI SHI!
THAT SOUNDS STRANGE, COMING FROM YOU, SHUGO KUNISAKI!
FOR-GET IT!!
...YOU COULD SAY THAT.
KOMIYAMA MUST FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT HIS PC.
IT FELT REALLY BAD...
THIS THIRD ONE IS THE BEST SO FAR!
WHEN I THOUGHT MY PC, "SHUGO," MIGHT GET DELETED.
AH SO THAT'S WHERE "THE THIRD" COMES FROM
UM...
COUGH
DON'T YOU DARE CAPTURE THIS SCREEN-SHOT!!
YOU...
Pant Pant Pant
Stop that!!
Don't look!!
PON

NEW GENERATION ONLINE
THE WORLD

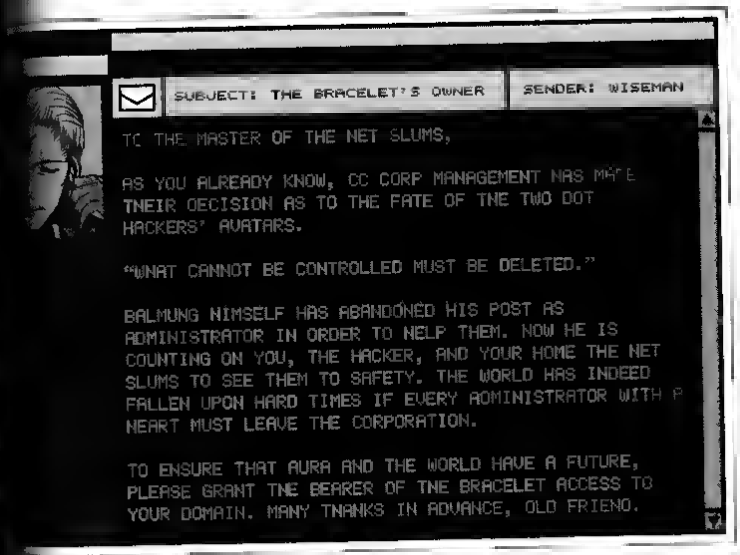
!!
E-MAIL...? WHO COULD HAVE SENT IT AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?
CLICK
HM...
WH-WHAT IS IT, ONII-CHAN?
RENA, WAKE UP!!
HEY, RENA!

!!
IT'S FROM MIREILLE!!


HUH?
MOTHER'S CALLING ME FOR REAL...
Mirai...
Mirai, it's time for dinner.

.....

...Mirai?
What's wrong?
I know it's fun...
..but it's not good to play games all the time
.....
...OH, MOTHER... I...


SUBJECT: THE BRACELET'S OWNER
SENDER: WISEMAN
TO THE MASTER OF THE NET SLUMS,
AS YOU ALREADY KNOW, CC CORP MANAGEMENT HAS MADE THEIR DECISION AS TO THE FATE OF THE TWO DOT HACKERS' AVATARS.
"WHAT CANNOT BE CONTROLLED MUST BE DELETED."
BALMUNG HIMSELF HAS ABANDONED HIS POST AS ADMINISTRATOR IN ORDER TO HELP THEM. NOW HE IS COUNTING ON YOU, THE HACKER, AND YOUR HOME THE NET SLUMS TO SEE THEM TO SAFETY. THE WORLD HAS INDEED FALLEN UPON HARD TIMES IF EVERY ADMINISTRATOR WITH A HEART MUST LEAVE THE CORPORATION.
TO ENSURE THAT AURA AND THE WORLD HAVE A FUTURE, PLEASE GRANT THE BEARER OF THE BRACELET ACCESS TO YOUR DOMAIN. MANY THANKS IN ADVANCE, OLD FRIEND.

Games are something yo do to enjoy, right? (^_^)
!
YOU'RE RIGHT!
NOT AT ALL.
.....
..right now?
Are yo enjoyin it...
PON
PON
MAIL!
FROM OUKA AND HOTARU-CH...FROM EVERYONE!!
...FUN AT ALL!!
THI ISN'

Waaaah!
I...
I...
Oh my.
HIC
HIC
It was the same with me
Many of my fondest memories are of playing that game.
I see, my love.
You've made such wonderful friends.
I DON'T WANT TO BE DELETED... NO MATTER WHAT... NEVER..

LOGIN 15
SACRED ZONE: THE HIDDEN AND FORBIDDEN AREA
...FEEL THE SAME WAY.
THEY ALL...!
THERE MUST BE SOME-THING I CAN DO!!
YOU'RE RIGHT! I-I'LL WRITE TO EVERYONE! TO SHUGO!!
HM?
But, do you mind if I play with my old character for a bit?
Why don't you try doing what you think is best?
MOTHER...
It seems that even a housewife like me...
...can still make a difference

You br
out
prison
MIREILLE!!
I'll explain everything once you get there... hurry!!
Will you go to the area I'm about to tell you?
IT WA
ZEFI
REALL
She's amazing ☆
Well, that'll make things easy.
H-HEY, MIREILLE!!
Please come, Shugo!
The name of the area is...
...
Sacred Zone
...
...the Hidden and Forbidd--
BZZT!

Brrring
PIP
PIP
...SENDING HER PHONE NUMBER OUT OF THE BLUE?
WHAT'S UP WITH MIREILLE...
Shugo!! Good.
So my mail got through to you!!
AH!
IT'S ME, SHUGO!!
Click
Hello?
I needed to get in touch with you right away.
You had me confused, there I wasn't expecting you to send your phone number
HEH HEH..
YEAH. WE'VE MANAGED TO STICK AROUND.. FOR NOW
So... what's happening on your end?
WELL...
SOB
I'm just glad you got my mail
...'cuz that means you're not deleted yet

...MAYBE COMING TO MEET HER WAS A BAD IDEA.
YOU KNOW...
NOTHING
...ARE YOU STILL GOING ON ABOUT THAT, SHUGO KUNISAKI?
ONII-CHAN ...
I DON'T WANT TO TROUBLE HER.
URGH!
C'MON, BE A MAN! SHOW A LITTLE BACKBONE!!
...AND THEY MIGHT SUSPECT HER OF SOMETHING AGAIN
SMOOSH
!!

THIS IS IT...
I WONDER IF SHE'S HERE YET.
WELL, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?! LET'S GO MEET HER!!
SHUGO?

SHUGO-SAN AND EVERY-ONE!!

I'M SORRY FOR LEAVING YOU GUYS BEHIND...IN THAT PRISON CELL.
MIREILLE! AND HOTARU-CHAN, TOO!!

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE..
...WE'VE ALL GIVEN THIS A LOT OF THOUGHT
AND...
..WE ALL CAME TO THE CONCLU-SION THAT...
YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE IF AN ADMINIS-TRATOR FINDS OUT YOU'RE WITH US!!
NO DON'T WORR ABOU THA BUT-

Jiggle
Jiggle
SHUGO!!
WHAT'S GOING ON, OUKA? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
O-OUKA?!

don't look.

WELL...
SHUGO, RENA... WILL YOU LET US REJOIN YOUR PARTY?
SUCH A NICE STORY
WE'RE FRIENDS...
...RIGHT?
.....
Jeez!
IT TOOK YOU GUYS LONG ENOUGH.
POOCH.
BIMBO GAIJIN.
Go easy on them
THE PHRASE I'M SUPPOSED TO USE AT TIMES LIKE THIS IS ..
...
"WELCOME BACK," RIGHT?

WHAT THOSE SYSTEM GUYS DID WAS OUT OF BOUNDS. IT WAS AN AFFRONT TO THE GAME!
IF WE DESERTED YOU GUYS, SHUGO...
...THERE'D BE NO POINT IN EVER PLAYING THE WORLD AGAIN.
...WE BELIEVE IN YOU, SHUGO.
WE BELIEVE IN THE PARTY!

IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME!
THAT'S THE ONE, ALL RIGHT.
YUP.
ZEFIE...
WELCOME BACK, EVERYONE!!

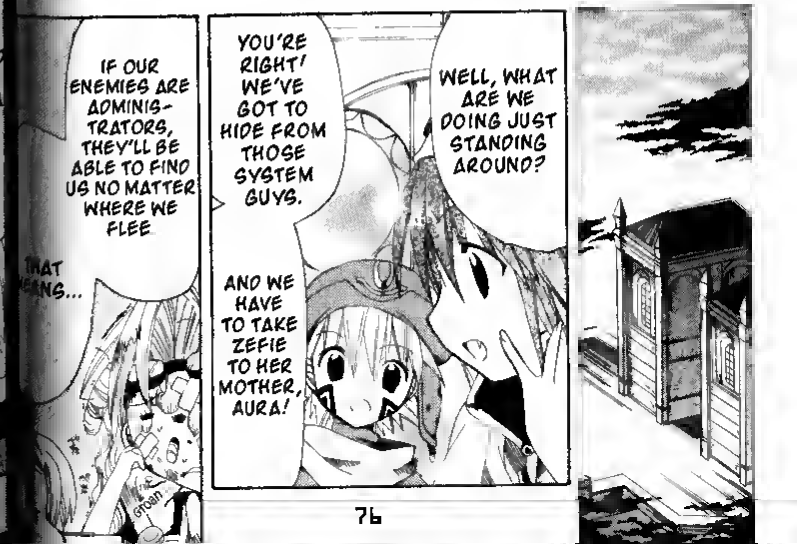
THE PLACE THAT IS IN THE WORLD BUT NOT IN THE WORLD!
...WE HAVE TO ESCAPE TO THE PLACE SYSTEM GUYS CAN'T GO.

THE NET SLUMS!
THAT'S RIGHT! WE HAVE TO GET TO...

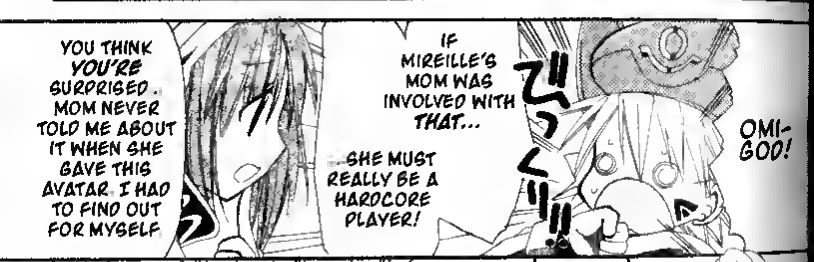
YOU'RE HERE.
AFTER YOU GUYS WERE ARRESTED, I CALLED ON EVERY CONNECTION I HAD!
HOW'D YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH ONE OF THOSE SHADY PLAYERS?
AREN'T THE NET SLUMS A PLACE WHERE HACKERS AND CHEATERS HANG OUT?
I WAS SHOCKED, TOO.
NYA HA! ☆
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO MEET UP WITH A GUY...
...WHO CAN TELL US HOW TO GET THERE.

UGH!
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?
ISN'T THAT THE GUY WHO RATTED SHUGO OUT?
BY THE WAY...

IT'S PAY-BACK TIME...


IF OUR ENEMIES ARE ADMINISTRATORS, THEY'LL BE ABLE TO FIND US NO MATTER WHERE WE FLEE
YOU'RE RIGHT! WE'VE GOT TO HIDE FROM THOSE SYSTEM GUYS.
AND WE HAVE TO TAKE ZEFIE TO HER MOTHER, AURA!
WELL, WHAT ARE WE DOING JUST STANDING AROUND?

SINCE THE BIG EVENT OF FOUR YEARS AGO.
MISTRAL AND I WERE GOOD FRIENDS BACK IN THE DAY.


YOU THINK YOU'RE SURPRISED. MOM NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT IT WHEN SHE GAVE THIS AVATAR. I HAD TO FIND OUT FOR MYSELF
IF MIREILLE'S MOM WAS INVOLVED WITH THAT...
...SHE MUST REALLY BE A HARDCORE PLAYER!
OMI-GOD!

I-I THINK I RECOG-NIZE YOU!!
YOU LOOK SO FAMILIAR..
RENA?!
W-WAIT A SECOND!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! IT'S LIKE YOUR MOM'S FAMOUS!
I SUPPOSE SHE WAS TOO EMBAR-RASSED TO TELL HER OWN DAUGHTER ABOUT IT
SO, YOU ARE THE KIDS WHO WON THE "BLACK ROSE" AND "KITE" CHARAC-TERS?
ARE YOU, MAYBE...

BOO!
I'M "MIREILLE"!!
Fume
Fume
Fume
HELLO, MISTRAL. I BROUGHT WHAT YOU ASKED FOR.

SO, THAT'S YOUR CONNEC-TION?
BUT HOW COME HE CALLED YOU "MISTRAL"?
THAT'S MY MOM.

MOM PLAYED A CHARAC-TER NAMED "MISTRAL." I FOUND OUT THAT SHE WAS A FAMOUS RARE HUNTER IN THE WORLD A WHILE BACK.
HUH?
I MEAN, MY REAL MOM.

I'M SUPPOSED TO DELIVER THIS ON SOMEONE ELSE'S BEHALF.
BEFORE I FORGET, HERE. I'VE GOT A PRESENT FOR YOU TWO!
SHU-BOH!! RENA!!
YOU TWO HAVE DONE PRETTY WELL FOR YOURSELVES, EH?
KAZ, WHAT'S THAT?
A SECRET ITEM--HELBA KEY.
HELBA KEY...
WITH THIS GIFT COMES A MESSAGE "USE THIS KEY AT THE CHAOS GATE."
SO...
...THAT'S THE KEY TO THE NET SLUMS, HUH?
!
カロン

YOU'VE GROWN UP.
RENA."
SHU-BO."
...MY OLD NEIGH-BORS.
THE KUNISAKI TWINS IT'S GREAT TO SEE YOU AGAIN..
they don't get it but they're crying anyway
!!
!
I KNEW IT!
KAZ...? ARE YOU REALLY KAZ?!

KOMIYAMA?!
WAIT A MOMENT, ADMINIS-TRATOR!!

OUR INVESTIGATION HAS REVEALED A HISTORY OF ABUSES BEYOND THE TRIVIAL INCIDENT WITH YOUR CHARACTER
BUT--
WHAT?

YOUR ALLEGATION IS NO LONGER RELATIVE.
I DROP ALL CHARGES AGAINST SHUGO KUNISAKI, SO PLEASE LET HIM BE!!
LOOK! MY CHARACTERIS BACK T NORMA

...THEY'RE INNO--
ARRESTING KUNISAKI IS ONE THING, BUT RENA-CHAN AND THE LITTLE GIRL--
THIS IS A GAME, NOT A DICTATORSHIP!
NO WAY!

THANK YOU FOR DELIVERING IT TO ME.
T PLAN GAME OGETHER N BETTER N'T COULD E HOPED.

YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWED THIS WHOLE TIME?!
OH NO! IT'S THOSE ADMIN DUDES!
!

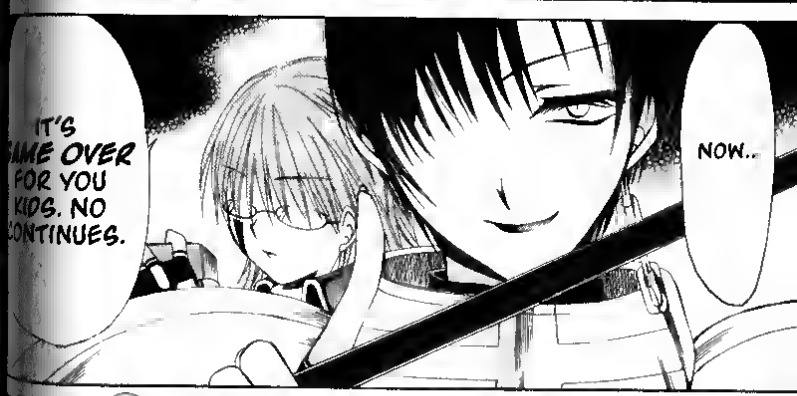
THE HIVE OF CORRUPTED DATA. ONCE WE TAKE CONTROL OF THE NET SLUMS, WE CAN ELIMINATE FILTH LIKE YOU FROM THE WORLD.

SHE'S THE ONE WHO TOLD US ABOUT THE NET SLUMS AT NAVAL MONTE!!
!!
HEY! I REMEMBER HER!
SO, WE'VE BEEN TRICKED?!

SHUGO... SO YOUR PARTY IS INVOLVED WITH THE NET SLUMS AFTER ALL JUST AS I SUSPECTED

NEW GENERATION ONLINE

THE WORLD



NOW, HAND IT OVER.
THE SECRET TO UNLOCKING THE NET SLUMS--THE HELBA KEY.
...THAT I WOULD PROTECT THIS "WORLD" NO MATTER WHAT.
LOGIN 16 SPEAR THROUGH THE HEART
I PROMISED MYSELF...
...AS I SAW HIM LEAVE...
SUBJECT: RE: TO OUKA
SENDER: OUKA
...WHAT IS POWER?" THAT'S THE ANSWER I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR SINCE JOINING THE WORLD, AND ALL ALONG THE ANSWER WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME!
IN THIS GAME, ABSOLUTE POWER LIES IN OUR USER AGREEMENTS AND IN THE HANDS OF SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS. AFTER SHUGO WAS ARRESTED AND THE REST OF US THREATENED WITH PUNISHMENT, IT ALL BECAME CLEAR.
AFTER READING THE MAIL FROM MIREILLE, I DIDN'T HESITATE TO ANSWER. I FEEL THE SAME AS SHE DOES.
I DO NOT WANT TO LOSE THE FEW MONTHS I SPENT WITH SHUGO. AS OUKA, I MIGHT PLAY TO TEST MY STRENGTH, BUT A GAME WHERE I CAN'T PLAY WITH MY FRIENDS ISN'T WORTH PLAYING.
INSTEAD OF REGRETTING IT LATER, I WANT TO DO WHAT I CAN DO NOW. THAT WAY, NO MATTER HOW HARD IT IS, I WON'T LOSE WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO ME. WE ARE A TEAM, AFTER ALL.

IF YOU CAN, THAT IS
GO AHEAD.
YOU..
YOU, WATCH YOUR WORDS OR I'LL TERMINATE YOUR ACCOUNT!
YES, MA'AM!!
ARREST HIM! ARREST THEM ALL!!
YOU DARE MOCK ME?!
DON'T WORRY.
GO, SHUGO!!
KAZ!!
KAZ! ONII-CHAN!!
THOSE SUITS AT CC CORP. NEVER LEARN
WHAT A SHAME.

KNOWING THAT, YOU CHOOSE TO KEEP IT, YOU ARE IN VIOLATION OF YOUR USER AGREEMENT.
THAT KEY IS A CHEAT ITEM.
KOMIYAMA'S BEEN SUSPENDED.
KAZ...
I MUST HAVE YOU TESTIFY TO WHERE THE KEY CAME FROM.
AND YOU, THERE. I REQUIRE YOU TO COME WITH ME.
BUT I ABSOLUTELY DO NOT TRUST CC CORP.
I LOVE THE WORLD...
BITE ME.

TADH!!
GAH!!
WHAT A DISAP-POINT-MENT.
I WAS EXPECT-ING YOU COMPANY THUGS TO BE A LITTLE TOUGHER.
WHA--?!
SHE'S TOO STRONG!!
P-PLEASE HEAL ME!!
I'M NOT A DOG.
IF I GIVE THE ORDER...
...YOU DIE LIKE A DOG.
DO YOU REALLY WANT YOUR CHARACTERS TO GET DELETED?!
WE'VE WARNED YOU!

!!
BUT... WHAT ABOUT KAZ?!
SHUGO, RENA! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
YOUR NAME'S KAZ, HUH?
NOW YOU'RE WHAT I CALL...

UGH!
THAT'S FOR ALL THE PAIN YOU'VE CAUSED MY FRIENDS!
CAP-TAIN!
K-KAMUI-SAN!!
HII-YA!
GO! SHUGO!!
WOLVES...
...DO NOT OBEY YOU "DOGS."
!!
WAIT!
OUKA-SAN, COULD I BUY YOU DINNER SOMETIME AT MAC ANU?
CALL ME OUKA
NICE WORK, WOLFY

I'M A WOLF!
AND PROUD OF IT!
OUKA IS MY ALTER EGO.
I CAN DECIDE MY FATE MYSELF.

Shugo and his party members...
...are protected.
EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE LIMITED EDITION CHARACTERS, THEIR ACCOUNTS ARE STILL PROPERTY OF THE CC CORPORATION!
THAT'S RIDICULOUS!
The corporation...
...did not hold the event which gave away that gift.
It was held without our notice.
!?
All further information is classified.
As a system administrator, you must complete the task we have given you.
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO..?
're unable to delete them.
Shugo and 's party are deletable.
...THE COBALT KNIGHT BRIGADE WILL STOP IT!
NO MATTER WHAT IT IS...
THERE'S SOMETHING.
SOMETHING UNKNOWN, SOMETHING DANGEROUS, LOOSE IN THE WORLD.
SURE, IF WE SURVIVE!
WE WON'T BE DELETED.
WE'VE GOT HER PROTECTION
DON'T WORRY
WHY WON'T YOU GRANT ME PERMISSION TO DELETE SHUGO AND HIS PARTY?!
WHY NOT?
WHAT IS UPPER MANAGEMENT HIDING FROM US?!
DAMMIT!
DAMN...
THAT GUY... DID HE HACK INTO OUR DATA?
HOW. .HOW CAN THERE BE USERS WHOSE ACCOUNTS CAN'T BE DELETED?

EVEN IF IT KILLS ME...
...I WILL NOT LET YOU INTERFERE WITH MY MISTRESS.
UGH
WHAT-EVER HE HIT US WITH IS WEARING OFF
RIP TEYN!
COBALT KNIGHTS, FIGHT WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT!!
RIP TEYN' RECOVERY SPELL AGAINST POISON, PARALYSIS, SLOW, AND DRAINS ON PHYSICAL ABILITIES.
THAT'S RIGHT.
GAH
"TAROT OF THE HANGED MAN"!
NOW'S YOUR CHANCE, KAMUI-SAN.
GO AFTER SHUGO AND HIS PARTY!
I'VE WATCHED YOU LONG ENOUGH THAT TO KNOW THAT YOU ALWAYS DO WHAT YOU BELIEVE IS RIGHT.
I WILL FOLLOW THE PATH YOU CHOOSE, WHEREVER IT MIGHT LEAD US.
.....
ALL RIGHT!
JUST DON'T UNDER-ESTIMATE THEM!!
HUFF
HUFF
ALL RIGHT!
WE'RE ALL HERE!
ALL RIGHT
LET'S HURRY AND USE THE HELBA KEY!!
AND, DON'T WORRY ABOUT OU-KA SHE'S INCREDIBLY STRONG!!
KAZ, TOO.
ALL RIGHT!
LET'S USE THE ITEM...
...HELBA KEY.

SHUGO!!
WHY?
WHY DO YOU SEE RENA, ZEFIE AND ME AS ENEMIES?
WHOA!!
GAH!
YOU ALL RIGHT?
SHUGO!!
OUCH.
SHE'S STRONG...
STOP IT!!
ZEFIE!!
.....
TO PROTECT THE WORLD...
...I MUST DELETE BUGS LIKE THIS ONE. IT IS MY DUTY.
A BUG OR A CHEAT, NO MATTER HOW TRIVIAL IT MIGHT SEEM
HAS THE POTENTIAL TO DESTROY ALL BALANCE IN THE GAME
BECAUSE YOU THREATEN THE SECURITY OF THE ENTIRE SYSTEM!
WHY YOU ASK?
WHOA!
I WON'T LET YOU!!
PROTECTED ACCOUNT OR NOT, YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING IF YOUR HIT POINTS ARE REDUCED TO ZERO!!
I'LL TAKE YOU DOWN WITH BRUTE FORCE IF I HAVE TO!!
UGH!!
BEING A SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR MUST BE A TOUGH JOB.
I'LL NEVER WORK FOR A GAME COMPANY.
THAT WAS CLOSE!
I WON'T LET YOU ESCAPE SO EASILY!!

EVEN IF THEY ARE DANGEROUS, YOU CAN'T JUST DELETE THEM!!
ZEFIE...AND MR. GRUNTY... THEY'RE ALL ALIVE!!
MADAM ADMINISTRATOR, I AM PLAYING THIS GAME FROM AMERICA
HOTARU-CHAN...
I...CAME HERE...WANTING TO LEARN JAPANESE. THAT'S WHAT GOT ME STARTED.
NO! TO ME THEY ARE SPECIAL FRIENDS!
THIS IS JUST A GAME
THEY'RE JUST BITS OF CODE, NOT LIVING THINGS
HE USED TO TELL ME ALL THE TIME THAT THE WORLD HERE IS HIS FAVORITE PLACE.
...HAS BEEN PLAYING THROUGH THE JP SERVER FOR A LONG TIME
A FRIEND OF MINE FROM JAPAN.

HOTARU-CHAN! IT'S DANGER-OUS!!
PLEASE STOP IT!!
NO!!

GRUMMOW
THAT TOTALLY KILLED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS SCENE.
Not that I mind it.
OH! ARE YOU HUNGRY, MR GRUNTY?
ZEFIE?
CAN ZEFIE GIVE HIM SOME FOOD?
HAI! OF COURSE!!

"IT'S REALLY A GOOD PLACE."
.....
"IT'S LOVED AND PROTECTED BY ALL WHO VISIT THERE," HE SAYS.
I DO NOT WANT...
...ANYTHING TO HAPPEN THAT WILL MAKE THIS A BAD PLACE!
...THIS IS MY DUTY.
HOTARU!!
NO!
I WILL NOT!!
STEP ASIDE NOW, OR DIE WITH YOUR FRIENDS!
NO!

HEY! YOU'RE GONNA POP HIM!
THAT'S NOT COOKING AT ALL!!
YOU, VAGRANT AI!
HOW DARE YOU BREAK THE RULES AGAIN?!
UGH!
HE'S GROWING?
IS THIS HOW ..A GRUNTY TRANSFORMS TO ITS FULLY MATURED STATE?
WOW...
.....

FIRST, PREPARE THE FOOD! CHOP, CHOP!
!?
NOW, CRAM IT ALL DOWN HIS THROAT. THAT SHOULD DO THE TRICK!
It's almost too easy
OH!!
Three-Star Cuisine!
PATISSIER ZEFIE'S SPECIAL...
GRUNTY COOKING!!
MY SOUS CHEF WILL BE OSCAR!

HORN...
LONGHORN...

WITH SUCH POWERFUL STATS...
THAT THING COULD DESTABILIZE THE ENTIRE SYSTEM!
...ISN'T ONE OF THE OFFICIAL CLASSES.
THAT GRUNTY...
MR. GRUNTY ?
I'M COUNTING ON YOU TO PROTECT THE WORLD FOR ME
I'M RETIRING...
I'M SORRY.
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS, NOT EVEN IN THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE!?
IT MUST BE RARE... I MEAN SUPER RARE!!
What the heck is that?
Incredible!
WHAT'S THIS? WHAT IS THIS?
ZEFIE!!
YOU...!
WATCH OUT!!
FILTHY DATA!!
I ALWAYS WANTED TO TALK TO YOU, MR. GRUNTY...
THIS IS SO GREAT.
HOTARU -
PLEASE RIDE ON MY BACK.
YOU CAN TALK?
ALL OF YOU, PLEASE GET ON!!
NOW!!

ZEFIE ?!
SHUGO ?!
WAIT FOR US. WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
MADAM ADMINIS-TRATOR.
WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A WORD WITH YOU...

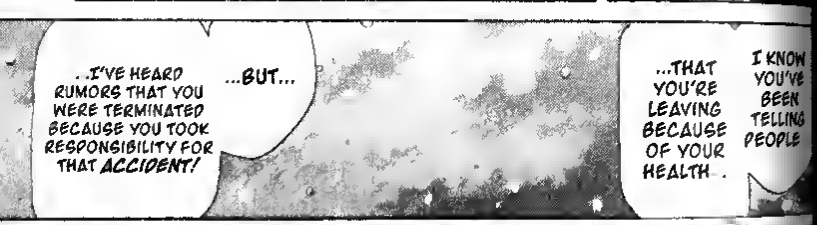
パキーン
NOW'S OUR CHANCE-- LET'S GO!
WE DID IT!
...SPEAR OF VOLTAN...
MY...
へたっ...

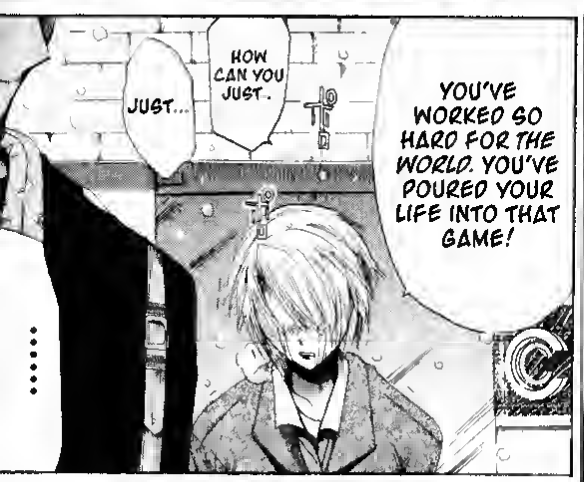
login_17

YEAH.
ARE YOU REALLY QUITTING?

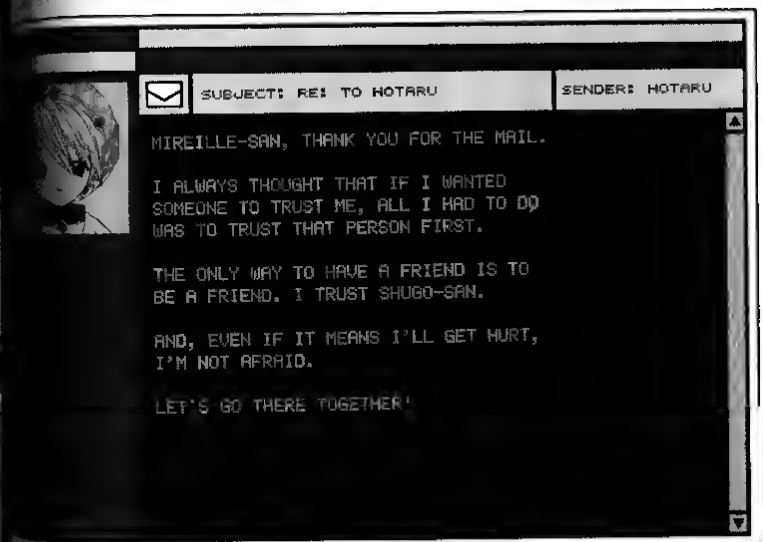
I JUST CAN'T!
I CAN'T UNDER-STAND IT!!

FOUR YEARS AGO--
CYBER CONNECT JAPAN HEADQUARTERS


...I'VE HEARD RUMORS THAT YOU WERE TERMINATED BECAUSE YOU TOOK RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT ACCIDENT!
...BUT...
...THAT YOU'RE LEAVING BECAUSE OF YOUR HEALTH.
I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN TELLING PEOPLE


JUST...
HOW CAN YOU JUST.
YOU'VE WORKED SO HARD FOR THE WORLD. YOU'VE POURED YOUR LIFE INTO THAT GAME!
.....

WHY?


SUBJECT: RE: TO HOTARU
SENDER: HOTARU
MIREILLE-SAN, THANK YOU FOR THE MAIL.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT IF I WANTED SOMEONE TO TRUST ME, ALL I HAD TO DO WAS TO TRUST THAT PERSON FIRST.
THE ONLY WAY TO HAVE A FRIEND IS TO BE A FRIEND. I TRUST SHUGO-SAN.
AND, EVEN IF IT MEANS I'LL GET HURT, I'M NOT AFRAID.
LET'S GO THERE TOGETHER!

Watarai-san!!
Ah..
Well, I've got to go now.
I'm sorry
.....
...I could've supported you!
if I weren't such a novice..
Can't stand it!
I WANT TO BE STRONG...
I SHED MY LAST TEARS THAT DAY.
BE STRONG...

I can't help but wonder..
.....
Do not feel sorry for me
I stand behind the choices I made.
Did the existence of the irregularity from the specification cause ..this?
...if it weren't for that Vagrant AI.
It has more to do with my heart.
No.
.....

MADAM ADMINIS-TRATOR...
WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A WORD WITH YOU.
.....
WAIT.
SHE'S DAN-GER-OUS!
SHUGO-SAN?!
JUST LEAVE HER! WE'VE GOT TO GET TO THE NET SLUMS, RIGHT NOW!

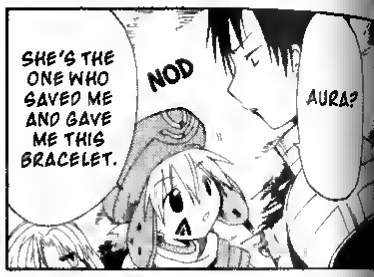
LOGIN 17
THAT TIME...
PT. 1

...SO THAT I CAN PROTECT THE WORLD.

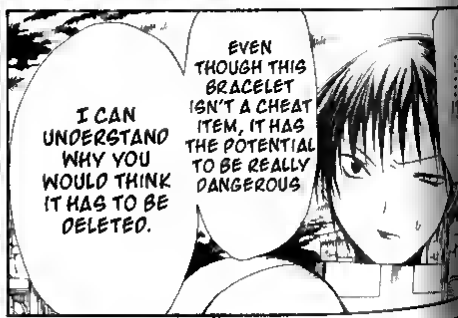
THERE'S NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT.
MY SPEAR IS BROKEN.
THE SPEAR WAS A SYMBOL OF MY BELIEF...MY DESIRE TO BE STRONG.
WHAT SHOULD I HAVE DONE?
WHAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO?
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ANYMORE.
RENA-SAN...
BUT --!!
IT'S OKAY.
LET'S LEAVE IT TO SHUGO.
BLUSH
...RENA-SAN...
SHUGO IS...
...OUR "HERO," REMEMBER?
A WORD... WITH ME?
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT NOW.
.....

I...
WHEN IT HAPPENED, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN. I WAS JUST THINKING THAT I WANTED TO BE A HERO.
IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME THAT BY USING AURA'S BRACELET, I COULD CAUSE SO MUCH TROUBLE FOR SOMEONE ELSE

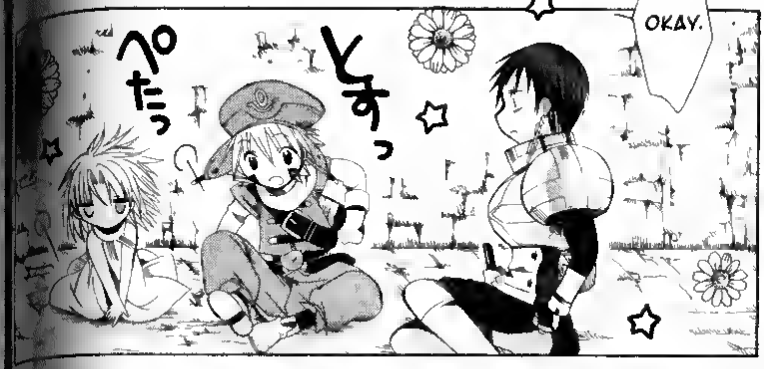
AND, SHE'S MY MAMA.


AURA?
NOD
SHE'S THE ONE WHO SAVED ME AND GAVE ME THIS BRACELET.

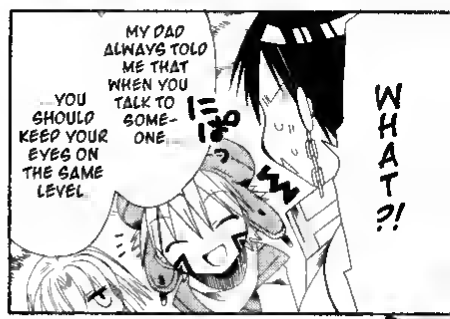
I HAVE...
...I'M SORRY.
I CAN'T JUST GIVE IT UP RIGHT NOW


I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WOULD THINK IT HAS TO BE DELETED.
EVEN THOUGH THIS BRACELET ISN'T A CHEAT ITEM, IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE REALLY DANGEROUS

...EVEN SO...
BUT...


OKAY.
とすっ
ぺたっ

DON'T YOU EVEN KNOW THAT?
HO HO HO...
!!


WHAT?!
にぱっ
MY DAD ALWAYS TOLD ME THAT WHEN YOU TALK TO SOME-ONE
...YOU SHOULD KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE SAME LEVEL

WILL YOU LISTEN TO MY STORY...
...ABOUT THE BRACE-LET?

GRR!
YOU'RE JUST A VAGRANT AI. HOW DARE YOU TALK TO ME THAT WAY?!
GRR!
GRR!
Whatever

...A PROMISE TO KEEP.
THERE'S SOMEONE I HAVE TO MEET.
I WANT TO KNOW THE REASON WHY I RECEIVED THIS BRACELET.
AND... I PROMISED ZEFIE...
...THAT I WOULD TAKE HER TO AURA!
.....
THE MOTHER OF A VAGRANT AI, AND...
...THE CREATOR OF AN IRREGULAR ITEM?!
A BRACELET THAT CAN ALTER THE GAME DATA..
AN ENORMOUS GRUNTY THAT ISN'T AN OFFICIAL CLASS...
WHAT KIND OF A HACKER COULD INTEGRATE SUCH A SOPHISTICATED PROGRAM INTO THE SYSTEM?
IF EVEN THE CC CORP...
...CAN'T TOUCH THE CORE DATA OF THE WORLD...
...WHO COULD?

JUST STOP THINKING!
.....?
BUT...
DON'T THINK.
IF SO, WHAT'S THE REASON FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE COBALT KNIGHT BRIGADE?
I THOUGHT DELETING THEM WAS AN ACT OF JUSTICE.
VAGRANT AI...CHEAT ITEMS...
...IT WOULD HAVE TO BE A "GOD."
OMNISCIENCE AND OMNIPOTENCE OVER A VIRTUAL UNIVERSE
WHO COULD DO SUCH A THING?
A BLACK BOX NO ONE SHOULD LOOK INTO."
IF THERE COULD BE SUCH
NO ONE CAN HAVE A COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD.
THAT'S WHAT WATARAI-SAN SAID!
...HOW ...?
...IF THAT'S SO...
UN-DELETE-ABLE USER DATA...
PROTECTED ONE

WILL YOU SHUT UP AND LISTEN TO ME?!
ARRGH!
.....
ZEFIE!!
I'm so sorry! I can't believe she did that!
WHAT THE--?!
BUT, YOU KNOW...
THE BRACELET, ITS BEARER AND HIS PARTY...
...THEY'RE ALL PROTECTED BY THE WORLD.
ピク.
...CANNOT DELETE SHUGO.
YOU...

WHAT DO WE REPRESENT TO THE WORLD?
HEY, YOU!
YOU!
WHAT DOES THIS
WATARAI-SAN...
...IS THAT WHY YOU LEFT?

NEW GENERATION ONLINE

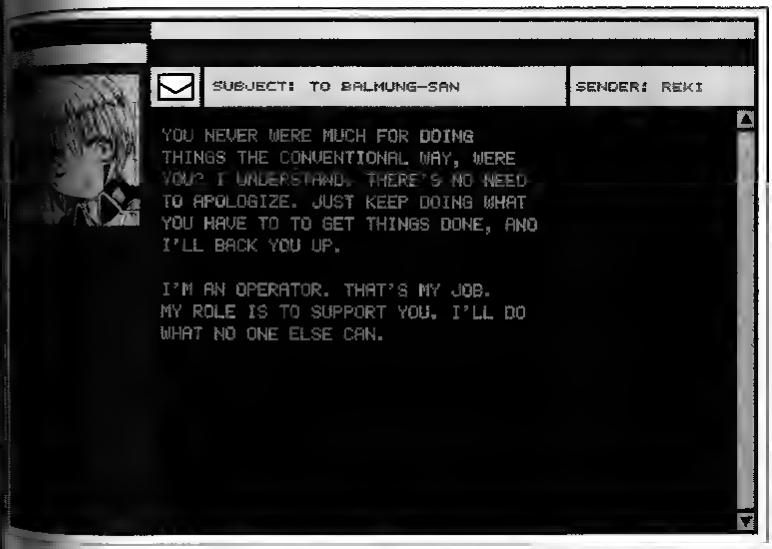
THE WORLD

...IN THE WORLD, EVERYONE IS BLESSED.

EVEN YOU...

...AND ME.

login_18
Mirei
.. Are you still playing?
Mirei?
MIREI
Okay?
Only today...
Shuqo..
Shuqo-san..


SUBJECT: TO BALMUNG-SAN
SENDER: REKI
YOU NEVER WERE MUCH FOR DOING THINGS THE CONVENTIONAL WAY, WERE YOU? I UNDERSTAND. THERE'S NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE. JUST KEEP DOING WHAT YOU HAVE TO TO GET THINGS DONE, AND I'LL BACK YOU UP.
I'M AN OPERATOR. THAT'S MY JOB. MY ROLE IS TO SUPPORT YOU. I'LL DO WHAT NO ONE ELSE CAN.

LOGIN 18
THAT TIME...
PT. 2
.....
...WHAT? "BLESSED"?
THAT'S RIGHT
EVERY PLAYER CHARACTER IN THE WORLD...
...IS EQUALLY BLESSED.

...BY A VAGRANT AI.
I NEVER EXPECTED TO BE LECTURED TO...
.....
THAT'S WHY I WANT TO SEE HER TO FIND OUT.
I DON'T REALLY KNOW.
SHUGO
ARE YOU AWARE...
...I DON'T CARE WHAT AURA IS.
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY...
NO...
...EXPERIENCE THIS EXCITING ADVENTURE. AND THAT'S WHY...
SHE LET ME ...
AURA SAVED ME, MY FRIENDS AND ZEFIE.
...OF WHAT "AURA" IS?
AT FIRST, I DIDN'T REALIZE WHY I WAS BORN.
!?
YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE OF YOUR WILL TO BE HERE.
AND THE WORLD EMBRACES YOU FOR THAT.
I WANT TO BE HERE.
I WANT TO BE HERE WITH SHUGO.
IT'S THE SAME FOR YOU, RIGHT?
BUT, THANKS TO SHUGO...
..NOW I UNDER-STAND.

...I JUST WANT TO SEE THIS ADVENTURE TO ITS END.
!!
...I DON'T MIND GETTING DELETED ONCE IT'S ALL OVER BUT RIGHT NOW
.....
...I JUST WANT TO TELL HER...
...."THANK YOU."
BESIDES, SHE'S MY FIRST KISS...
HUH?
what a naughty girl.
SO...
...IF YOU MUST...
I KNOW WE'RE BEING SELFISH...
...BUT...
... PLEASE LET US GO.
I DON'T MIND GETTING DELETED ONCE WE DELIVER ZEFIE TO HER MOTHER.
RENA!!
ME, TOO.

...AND HOPELESSLY OPTIMISTIC.
HU...
.....
HAHAHAHAHA!
She's laughing at us?!
COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTROL.
NO REGARD FOR THEIR ELDERS.
HEH HEH!
EHEH...
...STRONG WILLED...
THEY'RE SELFISH
MADAM ADMINISTRATOR!
.....
NOD
RENA?
PLEASE LET US GO!!

ALL ABOARD THE GRUNTY EXPRESS!!
ZEFIE!!
SHUKO REMA!
MADAM ADMINIS-TRATOR!!
HOTARU!! EVERYONE! HOLD TIGHT
THANKS, MR. GRUNTY
I MEAN IT!
THANKS AGAIN.

I'LL GATE OUT ONCE.
MADAM ADMINIG-TRATOR?
HM.
I WON'T TURN MY BACK ON YOU AGAIN.
JUST ONCE!
AFTER ALL...
...I LOST MY WEAPON.
...I'LL BE RIGHT BACK WITH THE REPLACE-MENT.
HOW-EVER...
わっ!!
THERE'S NO NEED TO THANK ME.
THANKS!!

You're going to steal my title of "most headstrong administrator."
A joke!
It's a joke!
BWa Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha!
Yup.
DID YOU JUST COME HERE TO MAKE FUN OF ME?
BALMUNG ...?!
Don't DO that!
Aren't you supposed to be consumed?
I'm playing from home right now
If you hadn't, I would have had to come out and MAKE you.
You made the right choice, letting Shugo and the others go.
YOU MAKE IT SOUND AS IF I'M SOME KIND OF EVIL MINION.
RIDICULOUS.

THIS IS SO COOL ...
WE'RE FLYING !!
Are you sure that letting them go...
.....

THAT'S WHY SHUGO PUT HIS FAITH IN YOU.
What was it that you wanted to protect?
KAMUI!!
The CC CORPOR-ATION?
Was it the SOFT-WARE?
DON'T UNDER-ESTIMATE ME.
The RULES?

THIS IS MY JOB.
YOU'RE the villain-ous one!
.....
Aren't you?
GYY
Whit?
CAN A RULE BE "EVIL"?
BUT IF THE ENTIRE SYSTEM--
I'VE ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT AS AN ENFORCER OF THE RULES, WHAT I DO IS THE RIGHT THING.
What's impor-tant ...
... into what's just and what's evil.
Not every-thing can be broken down ...
It doesn't work that way.

AND I AM THEIR CAPTAIN.
THE COBALT KNIGHT BRIGADE ...
...ARE THE SWORN PROTECTORS OF THE WORLD.

AND SO DO I.
WATARAI-SAN REALLY DID LOVE THE WORLD.
WHILE I...
HE LOVED THIS GAME SO MUCH THAT HE LEFT IT FOREVER IN ORDER TO PROTECT IT.
I REMAINED IN THE WORLD.
SHUGO, LET ME WATCH YOU.

YOU ONLY DO WHAT YOU THINK IS BEST FOR THE WORLD.
Forgive me.
SHE KNOWS THIS, AND IS GRATEFUL.
NO THANKS.
Do you want me to teach you how to write up a report?
I'm really good at it
Well, Madam Captain.
IT REMINDS ME OF WHAT WATARAI USED TO SAY.
"SHIBAYAMA...

KAMUI-SAN?
PHUFF
AS YOU WISH.
!!
SO LONG AS IT WAS KAMUI-SAN'S DECISION, I'M SATISFIED.
SHUGO AND HIS PARTY SUCCEEDED IN THEIR ESCAPE.
HMPH
KINDA COCKY, AREN'T YOU LOOKING AWAY DURING A BATTLE
I GUESS THAT MEANS WE NO LONGER HAVE A REASON TO FIGHT.
IT SEEMS THERE'S BEEN A CHANGE IN PLANS
GO AHEAD AND ARREST ME.
I'VE GOT NO REGRETS.
NO.
ドス

LET ME SEE WHAT THE WORLD LOOKS LIKE THROUGH YOUR EYES.
I THINK THAT NOW...
PERHAPS I SHOULD WRITE TO WATARAI-SAN.
I HAVEN'T CONTACTED HIM FOR SO LONG.
HIYA!
HAH!
...I'M BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FELT.

BRING IT ON!!
BUT...
SEEING AS YOU'RE OUTNUMBERED...
HEY, SHUGO...
YOU'RE REALLY PUSHING YOUR LUCK!!
BEST OF LUCK, SHU-BOH!!
STILL, I'M GLAD YOU'RE OKAY.
YOU NEARLY GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK!
SORRY ABOUT THAT
I'M REALLY SORRY I MADE YOU WORRY.
MIREILLE-SAN WAS REALLY WORRIED ABOUT YOU THE ENTIRE TIME.
MY HEART WAS GOING "DOK! DOK!"
RENA, SHUGO... YOU GUYS CAN BE REAL IDIOTS SOMETIMES... BUT I LOVE YA!

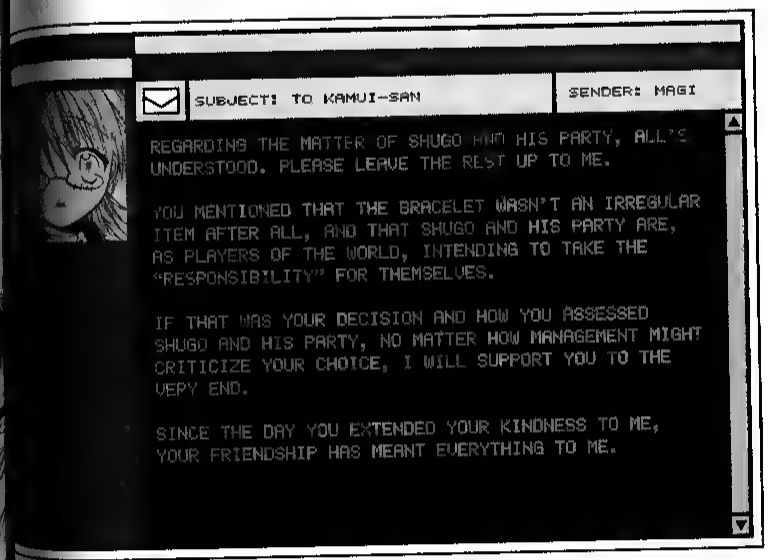
!?
DON'T GIVE UP YET.
LET'S CONTINUE OUR FIGHT.
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO USING EVERY POWER I'VE GOT. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE HAD A GOOD PVP FIGHT!
BUT HONESTLY...
PVP Player vs. Player
I HAVEN'T FOUGHT A WORTHY OPPONENT IN SOME TIME MYSELF. YOU'RE ON!
SOUNDS LIKE FUN!!
IS THAT SO...
UH-OH.
I'M NOT REALLY INTO THE WHOLE FIGHT THING...
HMMM.
LET'S FIGHT!!
READY?

NEW GENERATION SERIES
THE WORLD

WAAA
It's okay. It's okay.
You idiot!
AND TO SOLVE THE FINAL MYSTERY!!
WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO MEET AURA!
LET'S GET GOING.
TO THE NET SLUMS!!

WAITING FOR YOU...

login_19


SUBJECT: TO KAMUI-SAN
SENDER: MAGI
REGARDING THE MATTER OF SHUGO AND HIS PARTY, ALL'S UNDERSTOOD. PLEASE LEAVE THE REST UP TO ME.
YOU MENTIONED THAT THE BRACELET WASN'T AN IRREGULAR ITEM AFTER ALL, AND THAT SHUGO AND HIS PARTY ARE, AS PLAYERS OF THE WORLD, INTENDING TO TAKE THE "RESPONSIBILITY" FOR THEMSELVES.
IF THAT WAS YOUR DECISION AND HOW YOU ASSESSED SHUGO AND HIS PARTY, NO MATTER HOW MANAGEMENT MIGHT CRITICIZE YOUR CHOICE, I WILL SUPPORT YOU TO THE VEPY END.
SINCE THE DAY YOU EXTENDED YOUR KINDNESS TO ME, YOUR FRIENDSHIP HAS MEANT EVERYTHING TO ME.

LOGIN 19
NET SLUMS

SOME-
THING
WRONG,
SHUGO?
ER--
NO
.....
HM.
ALLY.
I'M SURE
HE'LL GET
TO SEE HER
SOON.
LET'S GO
TO THE NET
SLUMS.
WE'RE
COMING,
AURA!

WH-WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
OH! MT. GRUMBY IS SMALL AGAIN!!
THE GRAPHICS ARE ALL CHOPPY AND BROKEN.
OUT OF FUEL
ゾロ…
ゾロ…
TH-THOSE ARE SOME PRETTY WEIRD CHARACTERS.
ゴクッ…
YOU'RE TELLIN' ME..
TAP
TAP
ピコ

Where is the end? What is the end?
I THINK HE DATA'S DAMAGE
ZEFIE!
...BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO LOOK FOR IT ANYMORE.
IT'S OKAY TO REST.
GOOD NIGHT.
I DON'T KNOW IT...
Do you know the end?
H-HELLO.
Hello.
Are you looking for the end?
A GIRL?
Y-YOU SCARED ME!
Where is it?
Where is the end?
HUH?
What is the end?
SHUGO-SAN, WHAT IS THIS PERSON?

WAIT UP!!
WAIT !!
ZEFIE ?!
THAT GIRL LOOKS A BIT LIKE ZEFIE ..
?
ANOTHER LOST GIRL ..?
WHAT SORT OF A PLACE IS THIS?
NET ...UMS...
...SO I LET HER REST IN PEACE.
SHE HAD FULFILLED HER PURPOSE IN THE GAME...
WAS SHE A VAGRANT AI?
THAT GIRL ...
YUP.
ZEFIE?
.....?

Are you looking for the end?
The end...
...may not come in the way you expect.
Even so, do you...
...still want to find The End?
I finally caught up
.....?
.....
.....
WE DO.

.....
YOU...

WAS THAT GIRL...
...AN-OTHER VAGRANT AI?
YUP.
what's going on?
SCRCCH
Flower petals?
SHE WAS A FORGOTTEN PIECE..
...OF SOME VERY OLD DATA.
SEEMS LIKE THERE ARE MANY REM-NANTS IN THE NET SLUMS.
THAT'S RIGHT.
IN THE BEGIN-NING...
...
HACKERS CREATED THIS PLACE AS A REPOSITORY FOR ILLEGAL DATA FROM THE WORLD.

NO MATTER WHAT TYPE OF AN ENDING IT MIGHT BE...
WE WILL ACCEPT IT.
I hope your ending...
...will be kind to you.
GOOD NIGHT.

I'M SORRY THAT I HAVE TO MEET YOU IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...
...BUT BECAUSE SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS CANNOT ENTER, THIS PLACE CAN BE QUITE USEFUL.
W-WENA ...?
MY SWORDSMAN HERO!!
THE GUY WHO MESSED WITH RENA..
TOOEN
LONG TIME NO SEE! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU AGAIN IN A PLACE LIKE THIS!
rumble
good job, girl!!
IT LOOKS LIKE MY MESSENGER, KAZ, DID HIS JOB.
...HUH?! SO, THAT FRIEND OF MIREILLE'S MOM THAT KAZ MENTIONED IS...
I HAVEN'T INTRODUCED MYSELF YET, HAVE I?
MY NAME IS...
...BALMUNG.
IT'S YOU!!

...I'M HERE AS A PLAYER, NOT AS AN ADMINISTRATOR OF THE CC CORP.
BUT TODAY...
Pant...
Pant...
Pant...
Balmung
Rena-san!
Rena-san!

...I AM HERE AS THE DOT HACKER...
..."BALMUNG OF THE AZURE SKY."

YOU'RE QUITE FAMOUS YOURSELF, NOW.
YES. WE WERE COMRADES FOUR YEARS AGO. WE RISKED OUR LIVES TOGETHER.
SWORDSMAN-SAMA WAS A MEMBER OF THAT LEGENDARY PARTY?
BALMUNG WAS A FRIEND OF THE HERO KITE?
THE DOT HACKERS..!!
Even more surprised

Nyaaah!
EH...?
AH!!
SO... YOU'RE THE ONE WHO ORGANIZED ALL THOSE WEIRD EVENTS...
THAT BALMUNG?
FANTASIA FESTIVAL
THE ADMIN GUY WHO'S INFAMOUS FOR HIS LACK OF SUBTLETY?
.....
THE VERY SAME.
I AM THE SUBTLE ADMINISTRATOR, BALMUNG.

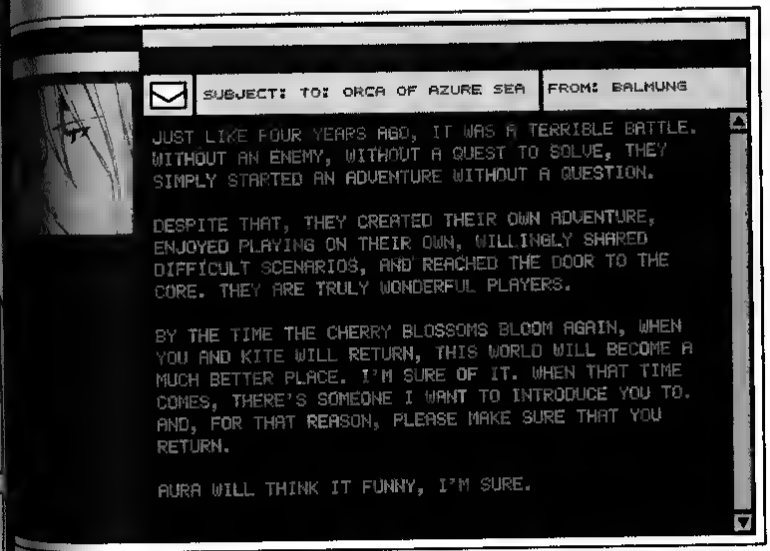
...SHUGO.
DO YOU WANT TO SEE AURA?
IF THAT'S THE CASE...
...YOU MUST...
...FIGHT ME!!
!?
IOO.
SHOW ME THE POWER YOU'VE DEVELOPED IN THE WORLD.
ONLY THE TRUE HERO OF THE BRACELET CAN SEE HER.
IF YOU MANAGE TO STRIKE ME JUST ONCE.
...I WILL TELL YOU WHAT YOU MUST DO TO SEE AURA.
!!
READY?
SHOW ME WHO YOU REALLY ARE!
SHUGO!!
SHUGO!
DON'T WORRY!!

...I WON'T HOLD BACK!!
FOR YOU...
...BALMUNG OF THE AZURE SKY.
HERE COMES...
!!
I STILL HAVEN'T PAID YOU BACK!
...YOU SAVED MY LIFE.
BACK WHEN I FIRST GOT THE BRACELET AND AT THE TANABATA FESTIVAL...
I'M STILL IN YOUR DEBT
I--!!
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU...
...BUT I WON'T STOP NOW, EVEN IF YOU ARE A FRIEND OF KITE'S!
YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON, SHUGO. I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES.

I WON'T LOSE AGAINST YOU!!
NEVER!!
Grin
WHO SHOULD I ROOT FOR...?
LET ME AT LEAST RECOVER MY HP FIRST! ♡
HEH HEH HEH...
...Boy
okay C'mon...

MY HANDS ARE GETTING NUMB JUST HOLDING THE CONTROLLER!
WHAT A HEAVY BLOW...
JUST A SCRATCH CAN DO THAT?!
READY TO GIVE UP?
ARE YOU KIDDING? I CAN'T QUIT NOW!
NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO QUIT.

login_20
HUH?
URGH!!
HI-YAAAH!
SHUGO!!
UGH
I GUESS THAT TITLE ISN'T JUST FOR SHOW!
DAMMIT...
I CAN'T EVEN TOUCH HIM.


SUBJECT: TO: ORCA OF AZURE SEA
FROM: BALMUNG
JUST LIKE FOUR YEARS AGO, IT WAS A TERRIBLE BATTLE. WITHOUT AN ENEMY, WITHOUT A QUEST TO SOLVE, THEY SIMPLY STARTED AN ADVENTURE WITHOUT A QUESTION.
DESPITE THAT, THEY CREATED THEIR OWN ADVENTURE, ENJOYED PLAYING ON THEIR OWN, WILLINGLY SHARED DIFFICULT SCENARIOS, AND REACHED THE DOOR TO THE CORE. THEY ARE TRULY WONDERFUL PLAYERS.
BY THE TIME THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS BLOOM AGAIN, WHEN YOU AND KITE WILL RETURN, THIS WORLD WILL BECOME A MUCH BETTER PLACE. I'M SURE OF IT. WHEN THAT TIME COMES, THERE'S SOMEONE I WANT TO INTRODUCE YOU TO. AND, FOR THAT REASON, PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU RETURN.
AURA WILL THINK IT FUNNY, I'M SURE.

LOGIN 20
ATTRIBUTES
OF A HERO
BALMUNG OF AZURE SKY...
WHO WAS A MEMBER OF THE .OT HACKERS.
CRAP!
IT'S JUST TOO HARD TO HIT HIM!
IS THAT IT?
IS THAT THE EXTENT OF YOUR POWER?
THERE HAS TO BE A WAY...!
...SHUGO.
SHUGO...
...YOU'RE WEAK.
TN!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT IT SO BLUNTLY, OUKA.
IT'S IMPORTANT TO REALLY KNOW YOURSELF
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT.
WHAT I SHOULD HAVE SAID IS THAT YOUR LEVEL IS STILL LOW

Grin
NOW HIS HITS ARE CAUSING A LOT LESS DAMAGE!
FOR SOMEONE IN YOUR SHOES, A SINGLE STRIKE CAN BECOME A FATAL BLOW.
IF YOUR LEVEL IS LOW, YOUR HP IS NATURALLY LOW, TOO.
HUH? THAT'S BECAUSE I'M USING A CHARM.
...HOW ARE YOU GOING SO FAST?
MIREILLE ...
MIREILLE !! WAIT UP!
THEN I DON'T HAVE TO END SO MUCH TIME HEALING MYSELF!
THAT'S RIGHT! IF I SUSTAIN LESS DAMAGE...
IF YOU MUST FACE STRONGER ENEMIES, TRY TO LOWER THEIR ATTACK POWER TO YOUR LEVEL ...
IT'S ONE OF THE MOST BASIC OF BASIC TRICKS!
YOU KNOW, "SPEED CHARM," WHICH UPS YOUR CHARACTER'S SPEED
HE'S FAST!!
'LL CUT OWN HIS URACY!!
AND "HUNTER'S BANE"!!
THAT'LL REDUCE HIS PHYSICAL ATTACKS !!
"WARRIOR'S BANE"!!
HAAH!
"SPEED CHARM"!!
THAT'S IT!
AS A TWIN BLADE, YOUR SPEED IS FASTER TO BEGIN WITH!
I NEED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MY ATTRIBUTES!
HUFF
GUH!
!
ALL RIGHT
HUFF
HM ...

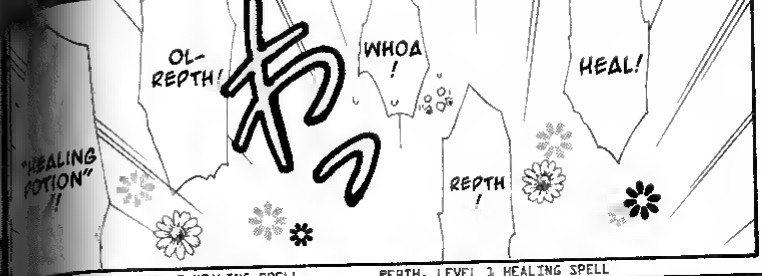
HOTARU-CHAN
YOU CARRY AROUND A LOT OF TAROT CARDS, DON'T YOU?
MUNCH.
AH--YES!
I USE THEM...
GRUM
...TO FREEZE MON-STERS..
HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH AN ENEMY WHO DON'T STAY STILL...?
I WAS JUST AN INCH AWAY!
HMPH
HUFF
DAMMIT!
ALL I NEED TO DO IS GET HIM TO FREEZE.
"TAROT OF THE MOON"!!
WHOA!
HI-YAAH!
AAAAH!
IT WORKED?!
!!
GUH
"TAROT OF THE HANGED MAN"!!
THAT ONE DIDN'T WORK?!

I GUESS THERE'S TOO HUGE A GAP BETWEEN US.
AFTER ALL, I'M JUST A NEWBIE WITH SOME COOL ITEMS.
I NEVER EVEN HAD A CHANCE.
I WAS NEVER A REAL HERO.
ONII-CHAN!!
DON'T JUST GIVE UP!!
I'M GETTING
...BORED.
THIS ENDS NOW.
AAAH!
NO WAY...
.....
BUT...
YOU'VE STILL...
YOU'VE FINALLY STARTED USING YOUR BRAIN...
SO...

SHE ALWAYS CONSIDERED ME A HERO...
...EVEN THOUGH I WASN'T THE STRONGEST OR THE COOLEST.
AND, THAT'S WHY YOU'RE A FINE HERO ONII-CHAN!
RENA...
SHE'S RIGHT.
I CAN'T GIVE UP!
NOT LIKE THIS!
あぁ あ あぁ
SHUGO!!
ONII-CHAN.
WHAT DO YOU THINK IT TAKES TO BE A HERO, ONII-CHAN?
HMM... I DON'T KNOW
YOU GOTTA BE SUPER STRONG OR REALLY COOL?
BUT TO ME...
...A HERO IS SOMEONE WHO WILL...
WELL, THAT HELPS.

PROMISE!!!
...KEEP MY...
MY FRIENDS HAVE ALWAYS BACK ME...
...EVEN THOUGH I'VE BEEN SO WEAK...
I WILL...
BUT I DON'T WANT TO FEEL THAT WAY, NOR DO I WANT OTHERS TO FEEL THAT.

SHUGO!!
SHUGO!!
SHUGO!!
!!
SHUGO!!
グッ!!!
WELL DONE !!
HEH HEH...
EVEN WITH MY BEST SHOT, I CAN ONLY LOWER YOUR HP BY ONE POINT.
SHUGO!!
そんな!!



OL-REPTH: LEVEL 2 HEALING SPELL REPTH. LEVEL 1 HEALING SPELL

...ONLY THREE OF YOU CAN GO.
WOW!!
FINALLY WE CAN GET THERE!
GREAT!
HOW-EVER...
PRIOR TO THE CURRENT UPGRADE, PARTY SIZE WAS LIMITED TO THREE CHARAC-TERS.
THE VIRUS CORE FUNC-TIONS ON DATA FROM THE OLD VERSION OF THE WORLD.
!?
...WE CAN'T ...?!
AFTER ALL THAT...
NO WAY!
N--
WHAT'S THE PROB-LEM?
THERE'S NO REASON TO STOP NOW. GO!

TAKE THEM.
YOU'LL NEED THEM TO GET TO THE AREA WHERE LUKA IS.
WHAT ARE THEY?
"VIRUS CORE."
IT'S A TYPE OF ITEM THAT CURRENTLY DOESN'T EXIST IN THE WORLD.
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THAT ITEM
VIRUS CORE...?
IF YOU USE THEM AT THE GATE...
...THE BRACELET AND THE VIRUS CORE...
...WILL REFORM A SPECIAL DAUGH-TER
...ITS DATA LIES RESTING IN THE NET SLUMS, WAITING TO BE UN-EARTHED AND BROUGHT OUT OF THE SHADOWS
JUST LIKE THE FOSSILS UNDER THE GROUND.
IT'S ISOLATED FROM THE FLOW OF TIME.

GOOD LUCK!!
GOOD LUCK-DESU!
WE'LL LEAVE THE REST UP TO YOU!!
...MIREILLE!!
HOTARU!
B-BUT!
WE CAN'T LEAVE YOU BEHIND!!
THAT'S RIGHT! MIREILLE, YOU WERE SO LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS!!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
SHUGO-SAN AND RENA-SAN...
...ARE THE HEROES!!
YOU'RE THE DOT HACKERS!
HURRY UP, YOU GUYS!!
SHUGO! RENA!
VERY WELL
READY?
THEN SHOW ME YOUR HAND THE BRACELET
YEAH...
WELL...
WE'RE FINALLY GOING

IT SURE HAS.
YUP.
LET'S GO...
...AND MAKE THIS INTO THE BEST ENDING EVER.
...TO WHERE AURA IS...

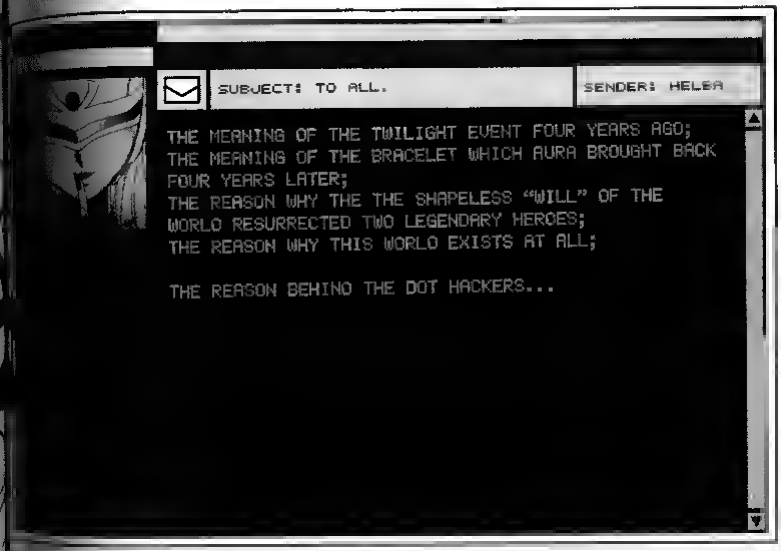
A LOT HAS HAPPENED...
...DURING THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS.
THIS GAME HAS BEEN...
...A LOT OF FUN, HASN'T IT?
CRIED
WE LAUGHED
GOT MAD
WE REALLY DID IT ALL, IN THE WORLD.

AREA NAME:
ENTER WORD:
"TWILIGHT"
THANKS, EVERYONE.
YOU'VE BEEN THERE FOR US EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.
WE NEVER WOULD HAVE MADE IT HERE WITHOUT YOU ALL.

NEW GENERATION ONLINE

THE WORLD

Hmm. Let's see.
How do I get this thing started?
THE WORLD
Okay
FOUR YEARS AGO
JAPANESE VERSION
LOG IN
BBS
QUIT
...but I kinda want to see what all the fuss is about.
I told him I wasn't interested...
Kaz keeps raving about this game.
BBS
QUIT
Hey, it's working!
I'll just play for a few minutes, and put everything back the way I found it so he won't--
HM?
login_01


SUBJECT: TO ALL.
SENDER: HELBA
THE MEANING OF THE TWILIGHT EVENT FOUR YEARS AGO;
THE MEANING OF THE BRACELET WHICH AURA BROUGHT BACK FOUR YEARS LATER;
THE REASON WHY THE THE SHAPELESS "WILL" OF THE WORLD RESURRECTED TWO LEGENDARY HEROES;
THE REASON WHY THIS WORLD EXISTS AT ALL;
THE REASON BEHIND THE DOT HACKERS...

A girl...
is she another player?
All right!
I guess I should say something.
HELLO.
."HELLO."
Hey!
Do you know much about this game?
Ohhh!
We're actually talking!
LET'S PLAY TOGETHER!!
PLAY?
Great!
My name is Shuqo Kunisaki
Shuqo!!
MINE IS...
OKAY
LET'S PLAY
I have no idea how to play...
...and it's kinda boring alone
Yeah!
I'm just fooling around on Kaz's computer.
That's why I want you to play with me!!
And you can teach me!

THERE WERE SO MANY THINGS...
サワ
サワ...
サワ
サワ
サワ

I CAN'T FORM THE WORDS.
...MA...
BUT MY MOUTH JUST ISN'T WORKING.
...SO MANY THINGS I WANTED TO TELL YOU.

MAMA!
MAMA... MAMA!!
MOTHER...
WELCOME BACK.
DID YOU HAVE FUN?
YUP.
IT WAS LOTS OF FUN.

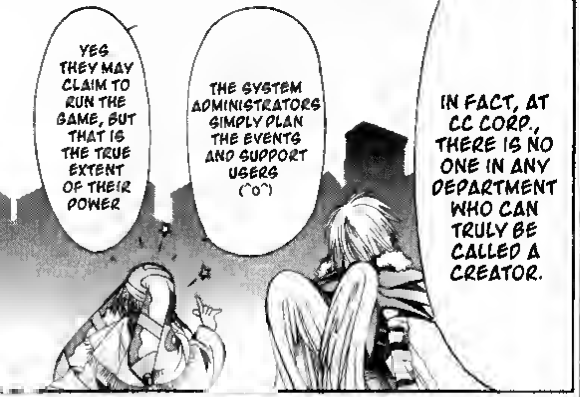
YOU BECAME A HERO AFTER ALL.
LOOK AT HOW HAPPY THEY ARE, SHUGO.
.....
YEP.
I'M GLAD WE MADE IT THIS FAR.
THANK YOU.
REIJA.
I'M GLAD WE TRIED OUR BEST.
I SEE..
SHUGO ?
...AREN'T YOU?
YOU'RE THAT GIRL...

Way too nerdy.
I quit
Games are stupid.
Don't say that! Onii-chan, you always give up as soon as things get rough
65
Academic Report Card
Whatever. All I have to do is get a D to pass.
Huh?
Morning sessions?
WHAT I...
I FORGOT ABOUT INTEGRITY.
...REALLY...
...WANTED TO BE WAS...
STOPPED TRYING HARD.
I WONDER WHY...
...I'VE FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT THAT
ALL I'VE BEEN DOING WAS TRYING TO LOOK COOL

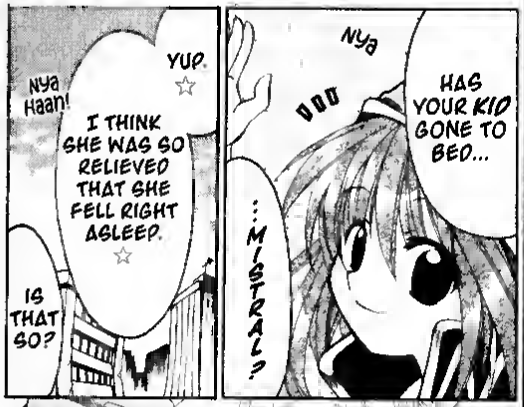
YOU KNOW WHAT?
YEAH!! I WANNA BE REAL STRONG SO I CAN PROTECT MY FRIENDS.. AND MY SISTER RENA!!
"HERO"?
I WANT TO BE A REAL HERO!
RENA
SHUGO
a Hero?
How lame!

WILL YOU LISTEN TO ME?

I MET A LOT OF PEOPLE.
...A LOT OF THINGS HAVE HAPPENED.
...AND SINCE I SAW YOU AGAIN...
SINCE I MET YOU...
AURA...
IT MIGHT TAKE HOURS BEFORE I FINISH TALKING, BUT...
I'M NOT REALLY GOOD AT TELLING STORIES.


YES THEY MAY CLAIM TO RUN THE GAME, BUT THAT IS THE TRUE EXTENT OF THEIR POWER
THE SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS SIMPLY PLAN THE EVENTS AND SUPPORT USERS (^o^)
IN FACT, AT CC CORP., THERE IS NO ONE IN ANY DEPARTMENT WHO CAN TRULY BE CALLED A CREATOR.

THE ONE AND ONLY "CREATOR" OF THE WORLD...
THAT'S...
...THE REASON WHY SHE IS CALLED THE "FINAL MYSTERY."
...IS A PART OF THE WORLD SHE CREATED.

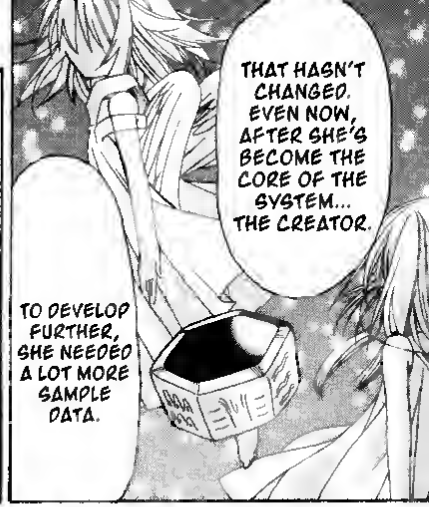

Nya Haan!
YUP.
I THINK SHE WAS SO RELIEVED THAT SHE FELL RIGHT ASLEEP.
IS THAT SO?
Nya
HAS YOUR KID GONE TO BED...
...MISTRAL?

AURA...
...MATURED, IF YOU WILL--THROUGH HER INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE.
FOR BETTER OR WORSE...
SHE HAS ALWAYS EVOLVED...

FOUR YEARS AGO...
...KITE'S FINAL ADVENTURE WAS ALSO THE STORY OF AURA'S BIRTH.
AURA WAS BORN AT THAT TIME.

BY TALKING TO PEOPLE...
...AND...
...BY INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE...

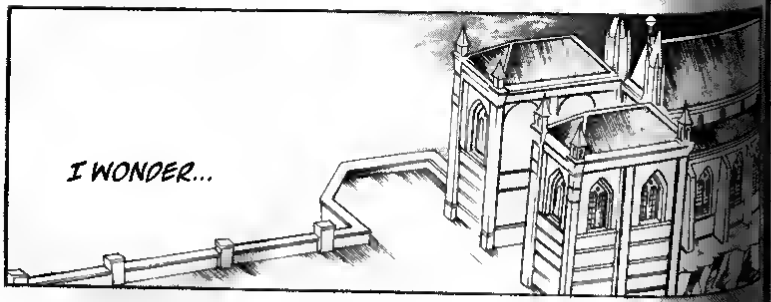
THIS EVENT--GIVING OUT THE .HACK//LIMITED EDITION CHARACTERS--WAS ALL PART OF THAT PROCESS
SO IT WAS ALL PART OF AURA'S PLAN WHAT DID YOU CALL IT, BALTHA? A PLAY TEST?

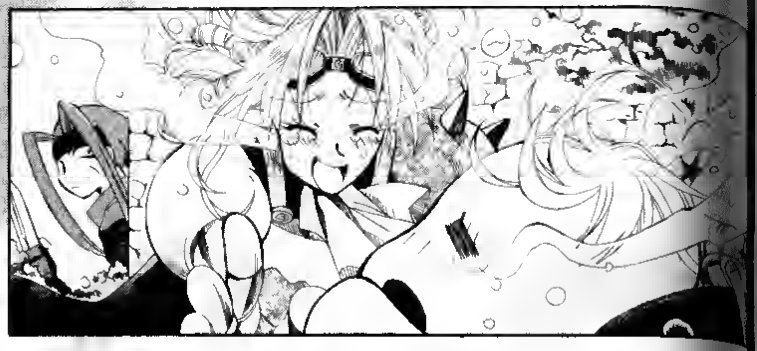

THAT HASN'T CHANGED. EVEN NOW, AFTER SHE'S BECOME THE CORE OF THE SYSTEM... THE CREATOR.
TO DEVELOP FURTHER, SHE NEEDED A LOT MORE SAMPLE DATA.

.. AURA WAS JUST WORRIED ABOUT HOW IT'D ALL TURN OUT. (^o^)
NN
PERHAPS... ☆

I SEE
.....
...BECOMING A MOTHER.
IT'S A BIG STEP...

...SHE...
...CONTINUES TO DEVELOP
IT'S NOT ALL THAT DIFFERENT FROM US HUMANS.


I WONDER...



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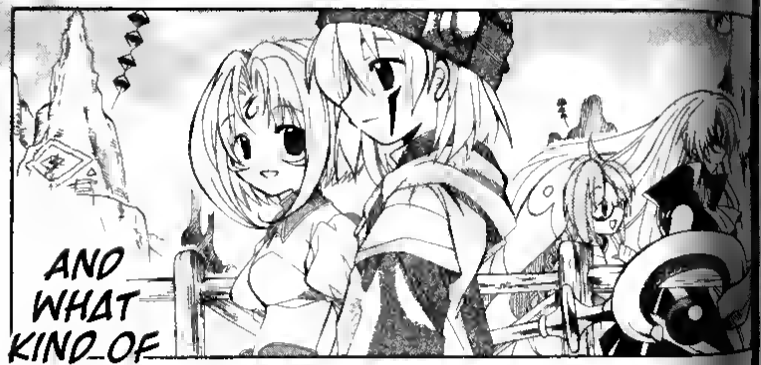
(Cyber Connect 2)



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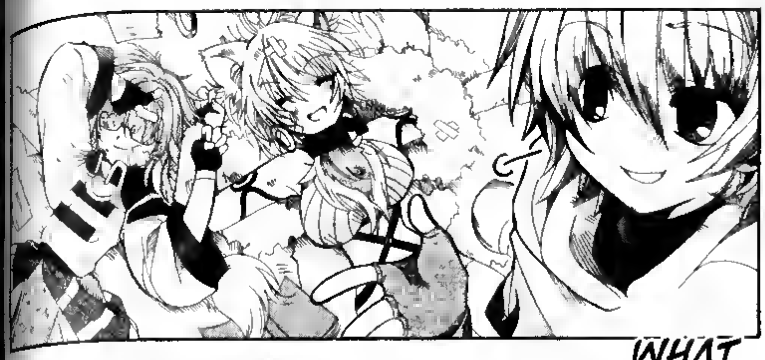
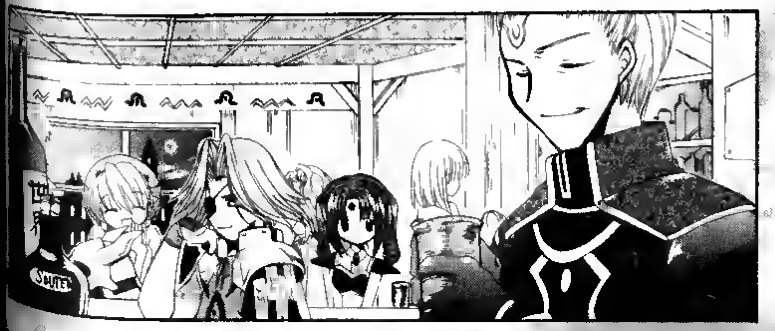
(Bandai, Video Game Department)



Manga // REI IZUMI

Story // TATSUYA HAMAZAKI



SUBJECT: LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT
SENDER: W. B. YEATES

THE HERO OF THE BRACELET HAS ARRIVED.

WITH THE PROTECTION FROM THE GODDESS OF DAWN
BRINGING ALONG THE DAUGHTER WITH THE NAME OF THE WESTERN WIND.

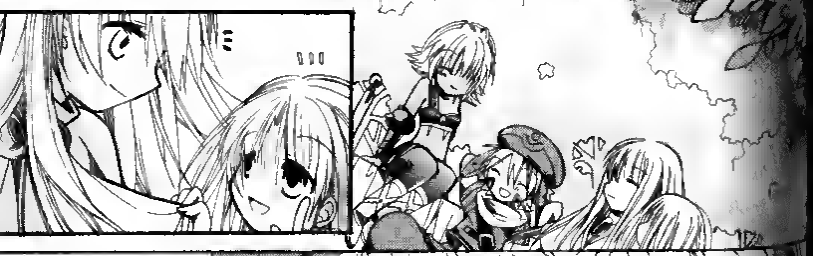
JUST LIKE THE HERO OF THE LEGEND
WHO SEIZED THE LIGHT OF TWILIGHT IN THE PAST.

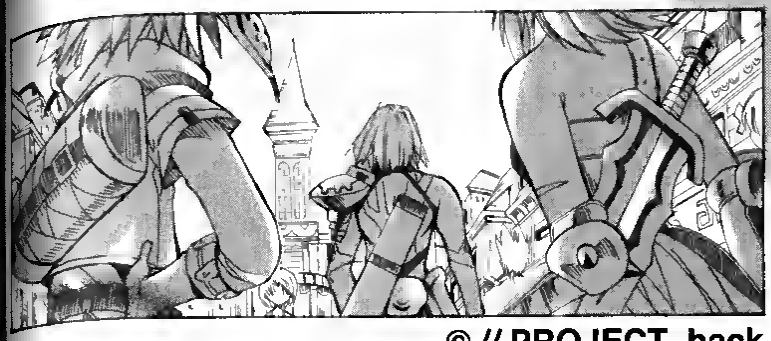
THE WILL OF 20 MILLION CONTINUES TO TALK TO THE WORLD TODAY
THE WORDS OF 20 MILLION WILL TURN THE WHEEL OF THE GODDESS' CARRIAGE TOMORROW

THE WORLD WILL TURN
THE WORLD WILL TURN

...THROUGH OUR OWN EXPERIENCES.

THAT IS THE WORLD.





© // PROJECT .hack

THAT'S SOMETHING WE WILL HAVE TO FIND OUT...

...THE WORLD DOESN'T NEED AN ENDING.

.hack//LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT

Thank you for reading
Never End...

It's the largest online game around.
The World...
...has 20 million players.
WHO, ME?
Online gaming does not have an end like regular RPGs and there are no different ways to go. Take Mireille, here.
EVERYONE CALLS ME...
...A RARE HUNTER!
...TRYING TO COLLECT AS MANY ITEMS AS POSSIBLE!
WHAT I LOVE ABOUT THE GAME IS...
WHEN I HEAR SOMETHING IS RARE, I GET SO EXCITED!!

See ya!

.hack//Rare Hunter

HERE COMES MIREILLE-CHAN!

WHO GOT A RARE ITEM? ME, ME, ME!
RARE! RARE!
NYA-HAAAN!
LA! LA!
I SO WANTED TO GET THIS GOLDEN GRUNTY! ANOTHER ITEM IS ADDED TO MIREILLE-CHAN'S COLLECTION.
LA?!
ぺかっ
SNIFF SNIFF
WOW
I SMELL IT! I DO!! THE SMELL OF RARENESS!!
NOT ONLY THAT!
IT'S THE SMELL OF A SUPER-DUPER-ULTRA-RARE ITEM!!

INCREDIBLE!
ARE THEY REAL?
!!
A-ARE THOSE...
...WINGS?!
THOSE WINGS...
ONLY THE LEGENDARY PLAYERS WHO CLEARED "THE ONE SIN" EVENT HAVE THOSE!
I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN THEM BEFORE!
SUPER-DUPER RARE ITEM!!
HEY, YOU!
HOW DID YOU GET A HOLD OF THOSE WINGS?
HEY!
HUH?!
WHOA!
WHAT THE-?!
UGH!
/FWUMP/
H-HEY! WH-WHAT ARE Y-YOU...
WH-WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?! WHY'D YOU JUMP ME?!

LOOK!
YOU LOOK GOOD IN THEM!
C'mon c'mon!
I'm jealous~
PIP
TALK
TRADE
PRES
MIREILLE
PIP
B-BUT, YOU SURE...? MEAN IT?
IT'S OKAY. I LIKE YOU, MIREILLE. IF YOU WANT, I CAN GIVE YOU A LOT MORE RARE ITEMS!
Denied
NAH. NOT INTER-ESTED.
HOW ABOUT MY SPECIAL GOLDEN GRUNTY IN RETURN?
B-BUT, I CAN'T JUST TAKE THEM FROM YOU FOR FREE!
YOU SEE...
I CAN MAKE PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING I WANT!

WAAAH... IT'S SOOO SOFT...
I'M SO JEALOUS!
I WANT IT! I WANT IT!
I'M SO SORRY MY NAME'S MIREILLE!
AND YOU ARE...?
Please tell me your name
...I'M LUKE.
I-I Lost it!
AH Ha Ha Ha!
WHAT A FUNNY GIRL YOU ARE!
EH?!
EH?!
ARE YOU SERIOUS?
YUP. HERE, TAKE 'EM.
I'LL GIVE YOU THESE WINGS, MIREILLE.
IT'S OKAY.

...
CHEATING.
THAT'S
HEY... MIREILLE?!
BYE-BYE! ☆
IT'S A GREAT DISHONOR FOR A RARE HUNTER TO KNOWINGLY ACCEPT A CHEAT ITEM.
HOWEVER I OBTAINED IT, THE DATA'S THE SAME, RIGHT?
NOPE
BUT, IT'S JUST GAME DATA, ISN'T IT?
THAT DUNGEON'S REALLY TOUGH! YOU COULD GET HURT, MIREILLE!!
WHAT? FROM THIS SERVER?
YEAH, BUT YOU CAN'T GET THE BEST RARES WITHOUT TAKING SOME RISKS!
I'M ON MY WAY TO THE DUNGEON RIGHT NOW.
JEEZ! WILL YOU STOP FOLLOWING ME?!
WHAT?
HE JUST DOESN'T GET IT.
WHY?
NOT INTER-ESTED.
HEY
I CAN MAKE LOTS MORE RARE ITEMS!! LIKE--
UH-UH NOT ON YOUR LIFE
YUP. I MADE 'EM!
THEY'RE A CHEAT ITEM?!
NO WAY.
WHAT? LUKE. ARE YOU WITH CC CORP?
ER-- THEN THESE WINGS...?
.....
HEE HEE
SO funny!
ACTUALLY COMPLETING THOSE DUMB EVENTS IS FOR SUCKERS. WHY WASTE ALL THAT TIME WHEN YOU CAN MAKE YOUR OWN PRIZES?
THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE AWARD FROM SOME "THE ONE SIN" EVENT, RIGHT? I PROGRAMMED THEM BASED ON THE RUMORS
WHAT? DIDN'T YOU WANT THEM?
HUH?
WH ...?
I DON'T WANT 'EM.
ポイッ
SO THAT'S IT.

VAK DON: LEVEL 1 FIRE ATTACK SPELL.

I JUST TOLD YOU I CAN MAKE YOU WHATEVER YOU WANT.
MIREILLE ?
MIR-EILLE !!
ARRRGH!
.....
DON'T WORRY. THIS PLACE DOESN'T LOOK ALL THAT DEEP. I CAN PROBABLY MANAGE.
NOT REALLY.
MIREILLE, I THINK MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST TURN AROUND
THE MONSTERS HERE ARE REALLY STRONG
LOOK, I APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT, BUT...
I GOT IT! IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO GIVE IT YOU, I CAN LEND YOU AN INCREDIBLY STRONG ITEM!!
YOU REALLY DON'T GET IT

G-
GIGAN
DON!
GIGAN DON! LEVEL 2 EARTH ATTACK SPELL.
THANKS, LUKE!!
WHOO-
DIDN'T
THERE
AN ENEMY
RIGHT BE-
HIND HE
THAT
CLOSE!
HUFF
WHEEZE
HUFF...
AH...
IT'S A LOT OF WORK.
WE'RE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE, BUT.
Nya Haaa!!
Vag don !!
G-
gigan don!
M-
MIREILLE
...

I DON'T GET IT.
.....
IT'S JUST A GAME.
IT'S SO BORING HAVING TO WASTE ALL YOUR TIME LEVELING UP LIKE THIS.
THE EASIER THE BETTER, THAT'S WHAT I SAY.
THAT WAY, I NEVER HAVE TO BE ALONE
AND PEOPLE ALWAYS TREAT ME BETTER WHEN I CARRY AROUND RARE ITEMS.
?
MIREILLE!!
!
PHEW!
IS MIREILLE DIFFERENT?

.....
I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOUR HELP, LUKE!!
...I'M HAPPY FOR YOU, MIREILLE!
THANKS!!
にぱっ
THANKS SO MUCH!
...IT'S REALLY A LOT OF FUN.
See you later! ☆
BUT...
THE WAY MIREILLE PLAYS IS SO EXHAUSTING.
Here it's my member address.
MIREILLE CALLS HERSELF A RARE HUNTER

NYA HA! ☆
JEEZ, MIREILLE, YOU BITE OFF MORE THAN A PLAYER OF YOUR LEVEL CAN CHEW.
WHEEZE
STATUE OF THE ITEM MASTER!
ぽんぽか
ぽーん
WE MADE IT!!
BUT WE HAD FUN, DIDN'T WE? ☆
IS THAT ALL?
I'VE GOT A BUNCH OF THOSE ALREADY.
LOOK, LOOK! THE STAFF OF TIMIDITY! A RARE ITEM!!
WOW!
SHE'S RIGHT I'VE NEVER BEEN INTO THE GAME LIKE THIS BEFORE MY HANDS ARE ALL SWEATY FROM CLUTCHING THE CONTROLLER!
Rare!
I DID IT!

REFLECTIONS IN THE AZURE SKY
Joining a big corporation can't be that bad, right?
I decided to join the CC Corp
MY CHARACTER IS NAMED REKI. I HOPE I CAN BE OF SERVICE.
BALMANG-SAN MY NAME IS FUJIO. I'VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO ASSIST YOU.
DO YOU LIKE THE WORLD?
Y-
YES, SIR?
So casual already!
REKI
HMM
IN MY CASE, REKI...
YES?
...THE WORLD.
I LOVE

MY INVENTORY IS ALL CLEARED OUT.
ONLY ITEMS I KEPT ARE MY NOVICE GEAR AND A FEW HEALING POTIONS.
...A RARE HUNTER!
ALL RIGHT! I'M GONNA TRY BEING...
THAT'S ALL I NEED.
Omake = Bonus
THAT'S UNIQUE
Take good care of it, kay?! I'll want it back!
It's face I mean
EEK!
WHAT IS THAT ??
OH! THX-DESU!!
Yes!
It's super rare.
HOTARU-CCHI, YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH GEAR, DO YOU?
YOU CAN BORROW THIS
—END—

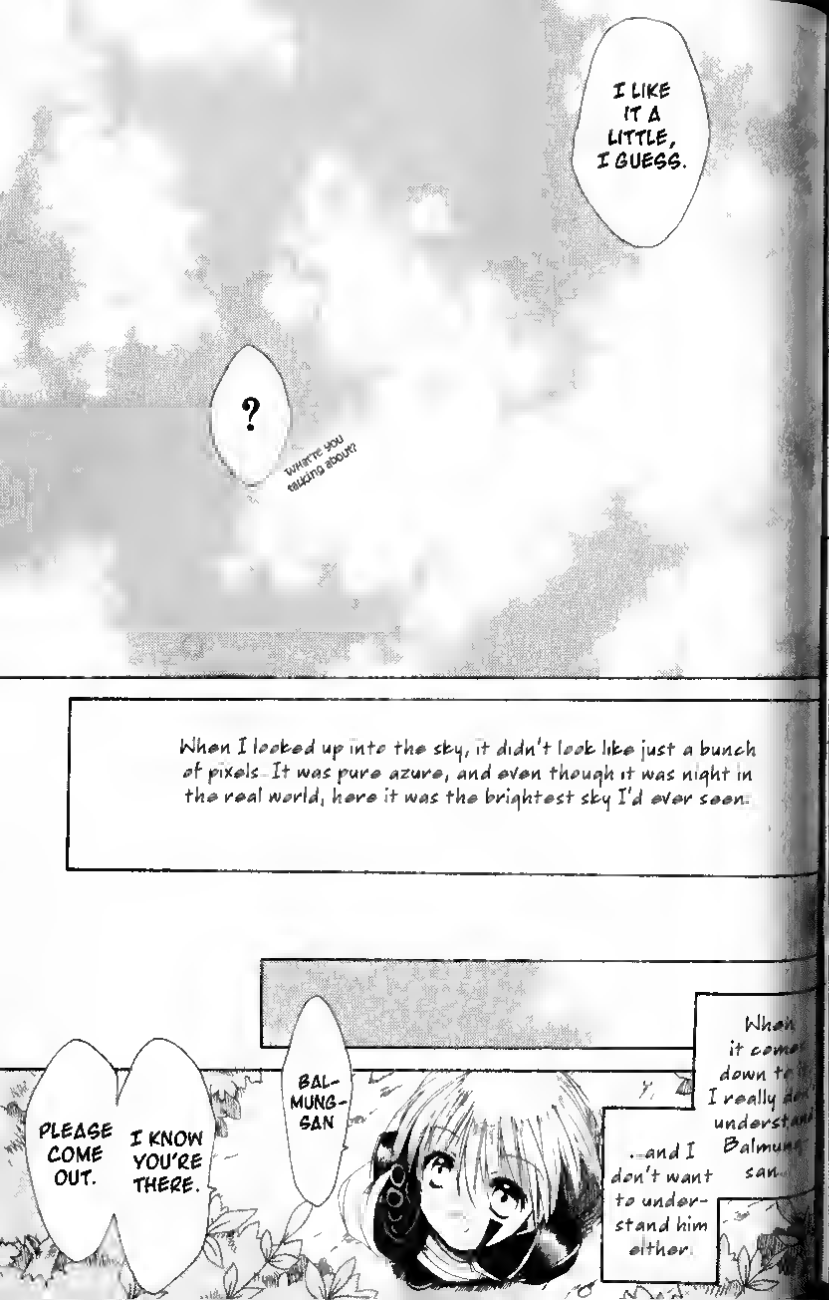
YAWN...
I'M SLEEPY.
It just goes to show that you can get used to anything.
...a few years have already gone by since.
BAL...
!
BAL-MUNG-SAN?
BAL-MUNG-SAN, ARE YOU AROUND?
I wonder if this is what happens when your hobby becomes your job.
YOU ALWAYS TRY TOO HARD.
OH, SIR...
He often takes on more than he can handle (And, I'm the one who has to clean up after his mess.)
HE FELL ASLEEP...
HE FELL ASLEEP AT HIS DESK AGAIN.
SHOULD I DOODLE ON HIS FACE?
Maybe I'll write "Silly" on him (Like in Ultimate Muscle!)

I AM BALMUNG OF THE AZURE SKY. LET'S PROTECT THIS WORLD TOGETHER!
I'M COUNTING ON YOU!!
...AH!
I had no problem with the company itself, but...

REFLECTIONS IN THE AZURE SKY
Although I thought of quitting right away...
WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?
O-OKAY?
...I HAD A BIG PROBLEM WITH MY BOSS.

GOOD MORNING!!
ER... YEAH. SORRY.
And please don't run off on me like that
NEW ASSIGNMENTS ARE PILING UP, AND YOU'RE ALREADY LATE ON LAST WEEKS'!
THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO SLEEP
REKI, IT'S YOU.
OH.
OH?
WHY IS HE SO FULL OF ENERGY ALL OF A SUDDEN ?
What's so incredible about him..
THE USERS ARE WAITING WITH BATED BREATH TO SEE WHAT I COME UP WITH NEXT!
I'VE GOTTA WORK HARDER FOR "THE WORLD" I LOVE!!
..is how sincere he is. All that nonsense he just said-- he totally believes it!

It was so much fun!
In college, I'd get so absorbed in my history papers, I'd forget to eat and sleep.
I loved it
I always liked history
To be honest, I'm a bit jealous of you.
That history degree didn't do me much good when it came to finding a job
...school ended and I had to face reality
But..
So...
I hope it wasn't completely useless.
I don't like to think it was all a waste of time
..for not giving up on his dreams
..I've got to admire him...
IF WE WERE IN THE REAL WORLD RIGHT NOW...
...I'D PUT A BLANKET OVER HIM, BUT--
.....


I LIKE IT A LITTLE, I GUESS.
?
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
When I looked up into the sky, it didn't look like just a bunch of pixels. It was pure azure, and even though it was night in the real world, here it was the brightest sky I'd ever seen.
PLEASE COME OUT.
I KNOW YOU'RE THERE.
BAL-MUNG-SAN
When it comes down to it, I really don't understand Balmung-san...
...and I don't want to understand him either.

HERE IT COMES
In other words--he's an idiot.
SO, ABOUT THE NEXT EVENT...
IT'LL BE GREAT! THE MOST FUN EVENT TO DATE!
OH, COME ON, REKI.
NEVER.
go, red!
go, white!
I'll be the one to prepare it, right?
HOW ABOUT A GRUNTY KARAOKE CONTEST, RED VS WHITE?
But...
...after all is said and done...
"DO YOU LIKE THE WORLD?"
...I guess that makes me the bigger fool for following him.
HM?
MORE THAN I DID WHEN I FIRST JOINED THE COMPANY.
WELL, ALL RIGHT.

Somehow I'm better at tracking down Balmung-san...
...than anyone else...
HEY! NO NEED TO TALK TO ME LIKE I'M A HOLED-UP CRIMINAL
NOW WILL YOU PLEASE GET BACK TO WORK?

I guess this job fits me after all!

ONII-CHAN ♡...
ONII-CHAN ♡
UGH! STOP MIMICKING MY VOICE AND SAYING WEIRD THINGS!
I'm starting the day!
RIGHT, A LITTLE SISTER SHOULD BE A FEMALE
I'm still missing something...
HMM... STILL NOT ENOUGH
COMPTIQ....
HM, A LITTLE SISTER... ARE ALL THE RAGE NOW.
ONII-CHAN ♡
スリサーン....
YOUR EYES GIVE IT AWAY!
HMPH. BUT I DIDN'T EVEN SAY ANYTHING
PLEASE STOP FOCUSING ON STUPID THINGS AND GET BACK TO WORK!
I HAVE NO OPINION ON THE MATTER!
WHAT DO YOU THINK, MEIKO?
I JUST DON'T GET WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT A YOUNGER SISTER.
HM...
FORGET IT, AND PLEASE GET STARTED WITH THE WORK.
LITTLE SISTER
HMM...
LITTLE BROTHERS?
HOW ABOUT
COMPTIQ
IS RESEARCHING WHAT HE REALLY LIKES TO DO?

Record of Rei Izumi's visit to CC2

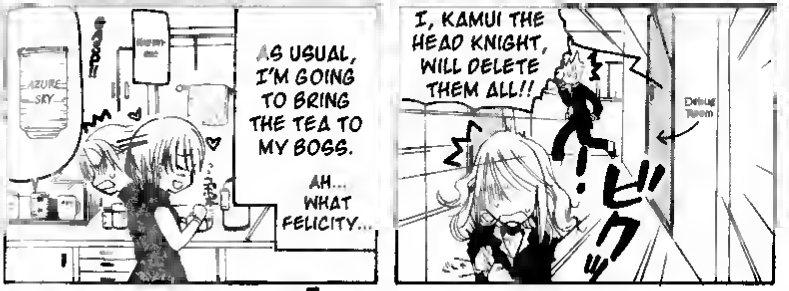
Hello there! I'm Izumi, and I'm the one that draws the manga!
Done?
It's finally done.
In fact, we went to FUKUOKA! The reason is... obvious!!
Go on to an Eat to Death Tour!
No way!
CC2 Cyber Connect
Record of the Visit!
There are so many pieces of games right here.
What the heck is that?
They've gotten official for the president!
Good job, President Hirata.
The development room also looked great.
So... so bright!
A BABY WAS THERE~!!!
A child of the co-worker couple. A super thoroughbred.
A baby inside a game company... It shows what a good environment it is for people to work there...
Everyone at CC2, thank you so much! Please produce lots of great games!! It really is a nice company with a good atmosphere
...Whoa. How cute! ♥(↑)
Gwachie Gwachie Gon!
SPURT
What're you looking at?
BTW, what's in the hot pot?
It has this small creature in it
Yum
SPURT
Huh... really?

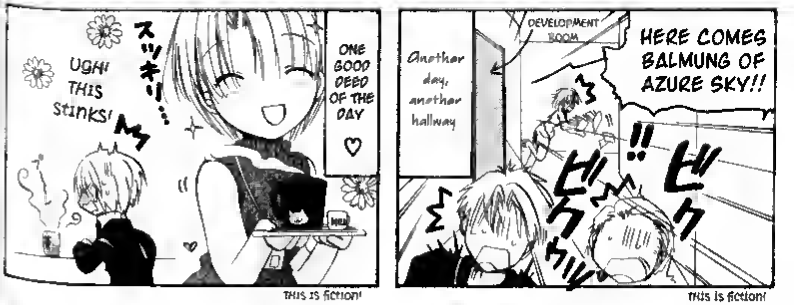
A Long Sigh @ Comix

Final Version Extended Version

Because of that, we had to rewrite the original story
Bags under eyes
Makibadi!!
Hellish planning sessions
The game version was not completed yet and Anime hasn't even begun
I joined the project without knowing what I was getting into
In the middle of the project, the decision was made to extend the series
CUTEMILY 2004
SINCE PLANNING BEGAN, WE'VE WORKED TOGETHER FOR THREE AND A HALF YEARS.*
That's quite a long time if you think about it.
Both the art and the story have changed between the first and last volumes. It's almost as if they're altogether different manga!
A LOT HAS HAPPENED SINCE WE STARTED THIS JOURNEY
HEART
And, the manga series continued to get extended, on and on....
The manga was made into an anime!
The Anime version is so sweet, I love it!
Ouka's breasts turned out to be a problem
I liked the Tanabata episode the most. It was a lot of fun to watch!
What a pleasant surprise!
I like to go to festival and fireworks and Yukatas and Arcades. Bonbori, yoshitsuki, etc. Sound of my geta, like a melody.

Let's Go Cyber Connect Corporation
I'M ONE OF THE OFFICE LADIES WORKING FOR CC CORP
My favorite phrase is "one good deed a day."
HELLO! I'M ASAKO SAITO.
EMPLOYEE
EMPLOYEE
Once upon a time, in the hallway of the real CC Corp


AZURE SKY
AS USUAL, I'M GOING TO BRING THE TEA TO MY BOSS.
AH... WHAT FELICITY...
I, KAMUI THE HEAD KNIGHT, WILL DELETE THEM ALL!!
Debug Room



This is fiction!

This is fiction!

I thought it was worth all the hard work to make this story...

The World was able to recapture the sense of wonder that it first had.

This Future came to pass because Tsukasa and Kite did their best.

...because with "Twilight," we finally got a real happy ending.

...we all ran **together**.

It wasn't a marathon or a sprint race, but something...

It was a baton race with a huge number of people involved

The Development team included not only the creators but a whole array of people across many media

I hope it's all right

And that baton will continue to be handed over without an end

Actually, I stole Itoh-san's words. Eh-heh

That's what someone said to me. Indeed, I agree that *dot hack* was like a baton race

SO LONG AS YOU CAN PASS THE BATON, THAT'S ENOUGH!!

We wanted the forceful Kamui to stand still just once more.

It just kinda happened. Zoie broke it for us

In fact...

...at first, the Spear of Voltan was not supposed to get broken.

Mumu was to get flung away and her role was supposed to end there

But after we broke the spear, it was hard to keep the action going

Although she's not a popular character I like her. I hope she'll find happiness someday.

Her real name is Saki Shizuyama chan

Anyhow, I have no regrets

EXTENDED BATTLE!

In addition...

Special

ADD ON!

Even though it was already extended, I still felt like adding more of Kamui and Balmung.

I'm dying!!

Stuff came up! I'll get it done, I promise!

I'm sorry

I'll jump on the earliest train to pick up the manuscript if I have to!

Thank you for overlooking my selfishness! Hamazaki-san, my staff, the people at Cometic, Bandai and President Matsuyama!

I'm really happy that I could draw through the end.

This manga was the first to usher in the whole *dot hack* franchise and the very last to end.

"Twilight" is the story of the future (well, now that it's done it's all the past.)

And then

Games <present>

Anime (//Sign) <past>

There are also the novels, Zero and AI Buster

End of the volume omake

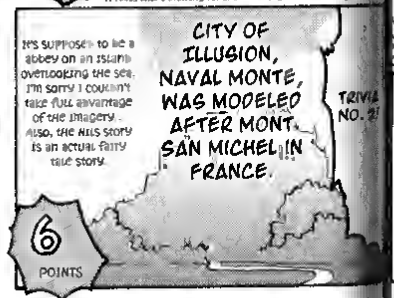
A page with a title I might regret later on...

Twilight Trivia

Mr. Mireille Grunnies don't have buttons! It's alive, isn't it? It's alive! Alive!!
When I press the button on this grunny, instead of "grunny" I'll say "bunny"

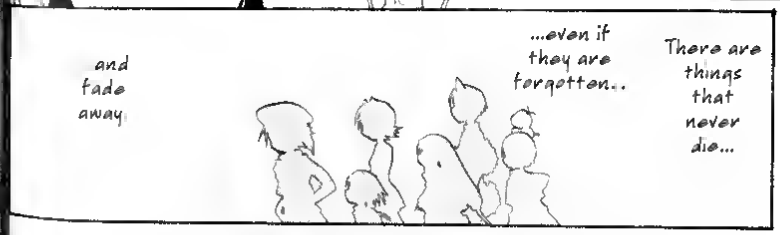
To top it off, he used to have a long hair like this. A prince type
IN THE EARLIEST DRAFTS, KAMUI WAS A MAN!
TRIVIA NO. 1
3 POINTS
It feels like a brawling for another manga or something.

We created them at the time we came up with names for all characters. We needed someone talkative could talk to, and, we decided to use him
BOTH REKI AND MAGI WERE NOT IN THE ORIGI-NAL DRAFT
TRIVIA NO. 5!
10 POINTS
They're both male PCs. I came up with the name Reki and Hamazaki-san came up with Magi


It's supposed to be a abbey on an island overlooking the sea. I'm sorry I couldn't take full advantage of the imagery. Also, the Mills story is an actual fairy tale story.
CITY OF ILLUSION, NAVAL MONTE, WAS MODELED AFTER MONT SAN MICHEL IN FRANCE.
TRIVIA NO. 2
6 POINTS

THE HAIRSTYLE OF THE BAD-DATA GIRL IS MODELED AFTER WOOPER LOOPER'S!!
It's been a while since we've heard that name
7 POINTS
This one's new trivia

SHUGO.. ARE YOU GOING AWAY ALREADY?
It was the last day of drawing
Sad times for Izumi-san...
THIS IS THE LAST TIME I'LL EVER DRAW SHUGO.



...I HOPE DOT HACK IS SOMETHING LIKE THAT!
FARE-WELL, DOT HACK!! I HAD A GREAT TIME!
To everyone who was involved with .hack. Thank you so much!!
Heart
All of the anime staff * Yasunori-sama * persons-in-charge * Tamura-san, Tanabe-san * Aimie-san, Tatsuya Hamazaki-san
THANKS
Thank you very much!
...AND FOR OURS...
FOR SHUGO'S SAKE...

Vol. 2 Staff * Mariko Tanaka-sah, Nishin-san, Imai-san, Kimoni Konnichi-san, Ryogan Saito-san, Hiroshi Agasuyama-san, Natsuko Uchiyama-san, Hiroshi Ishiwa-san, Junko Minagawa-san, Kazunori Iwai-san, Michiko Yokoro-san, Asumi Yasano-san, Wada-san, everyone at CC2.

SHANK!! THE RATE STORY

HE'S A ROBBER BY TRADE...
"SHANK" IS THE PROTA-GONIST.
...BUT WHAT HE STEALS IS NO ORDINARY TREASURE.
HMM... MAYBE.
IS HE LIKE A RARE HUNTER?
Hee Hee!
ANYTHING TO DO WITH MAGIC IS CONSIDER-ED TABOO !!
HOWEVER, THE WORLD SHANK LIVES IN FORBIDS MAGIC!!
Ooh... Ooh...
Ooh... ooh...
WHAT HE STEALS ARE "SECRETS." HE STEALS SECRETS REGARDING IMMORTALITY, LEFT BEHIND BY A POWERFUL WIZARD.

SHUGO and RENA's Special Appearance

An advertise-ment

"SHANK!! THE RATE STORY"!
Sorry, it's not available in English now
TODAY WE'RE HERE TO INTRO-DUCE A NEW NOVEL TO OUR JAPANESE READ-ERS!

FROM THE KADOKAWA SNEAKER BUNKO

AVAILABLE NOW WITH GREAT POPULAR-ITY!!

WRITTEN BY YOSHINOBU AKITA
ILLUSTRATED BY REI IZUMI

TO TOP IT OFF --!!
A MOUS-TACHE--?
LIAR
Amazing!!
OOH!!
EVERYONE WHO PURCHASES "SHANK" NOW WILL RECEIVE THIS SPECIAL FUTON SLIP CASE!!
THAT'S THE SAME AS SUGGEST-ED RETAIL PRICE
What a great deal!
OOH !!
SHANK
WELL, ONE VOLUME COSTS 533 YEN, BUT IF YOU BUY TWO VOLUMES, IT'S ONLY 1,066 YEN!!
ER..
NO FUTON ?
THAT'S IT!! "SHANK!! THE RATE STORY" AVAILABLE NOW IN JAPAN ONLY!♡
Wha—?!
SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE ♡
HOW DO YOU DO?
How very nice to meet you!
I'm the protago-nist
MEO
THEY USED THE WRONG ACTORS FOR THIS AD

I'M IM-PRESSED, MIREILLE!
SHE'S REALLY GOOD AT THIS SORT OF THING
SHE'S SO LIVELY
IT'S WRITTEN BY THE GREAT MASTER, YOSHINOBU AKITA
SO OF COURSE IT'S PACKED TO THE GILLS WITH EXCITE-MENT!
THERE'S LAUGHT-ER!!
THERE'S TEARS!!
THERE'S A MOUST-ACHE!

ONCE "SHANK" ENCOUNTERS THE HEROINE OF THE STORY...
...HE'S FACED WITH MANY MYSTERIES!!

.hack//UNPLUGGED